

THE STRAITS TIMES

Sport
ST Athlete
of the Year
nominee
keeps on
fighting CII



Top of the
News
New
offerings
from ST A14

Opinion
Quake-
proof
homes for
Indonesia
A30

Life Storage tips for the home
D2&3

World Amazon's
Bezos on
warpath over
scandal A16

Leaders will do what it takes to put things right: Heng

He rejects suggestion that political leadership has 'allowed the whole system to go slack'

Rachel Au-Yong
Political Correspondent

Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat said yesterday that the Government will not flinch from taking a hard look at itself each time there is a failure, and will do whatever is necessary to put things right.

But he rejected the suggestion that Singapore's political leadership has "allowed the whole system to go slack", gone "soft" on themselves and the public service, and failed to hold senior people accountable when things go wrong.

Mr Heng, the fourth-generation leader of the ruling People's Action Party, was responding to an editorial by Chinese daily Lianhe Zaobao last week which he said raised serious questions that he and his colleagues will not shirk from addressing.

The commentary had pointed to complacency as one reason for a spate of lapses such as the

SingHealth data breach, leak of HIV patient data and NS training deaths. It called on the Government to look at the deeper reasons for the lapses, to avoid systemic breakdowns and restore public confidence.

Mr Heng said: "We will not flinch from taking a hard look at ourselves each time there is a failure, and doing whatever is necessary to put things right. But I reject the suggestion by some that the political leadership has allowed the whole system to go slack. And worse still, that we have gone soft on ourselves and the public service, failing to hold senior people accountable when things go wrong."

In a 1,035-word commentary published in The Straits Times and Lianhe Zaobao today, he sought to show how the political leaders are working to strengthen the system, ensure accountability and put in place a culture of striving to do better.

He made the point that every generation faces its own set of challenges and serious incidents. But each time, the country's pioneers learnt the painful lessons, and put things right. These collective efforts have helped Singapore achieve a high level of development, he said.

Today, there are larger and more complex systems which have helped to improve lives, but also



PUTTING THINGS RIGHT

We will not flinch from taking a hard look at ourselves each time there is a failure, and doing whatever is necessary to put things right. But I reject the suggestion by some that the political leadership has allowed the whole system to go slack. And worse still, that we have gone soft on ourselves and the public service, failing to hold senior people accountable when things go wrong.

FINANCE MINISTER HENG SWEE KEAT

brought new risks, he added.

He cited the MRT network, where a new signalling system has been installed on the two oldest MRT lines, with new trains being purchased and rail lines built to increase capacity.

"We should have started renewing the MRT system earlier. But we have learnt from this experience and will keep on improving the system. We are not yet where we want to be. But surveys confirm that commuters have noticed the less crowded trains and more reliable service," he said.

On accountability, Mr Heng said failures will occur, and are investigated thoroughly when they do.

In serious cases, independent committees of inquiry are convened, and their findings, "however awkward, are made public". Individuals found culpable will be held responsible and disciplined.

He added: "If the lapse shows that the leader has been slack, negligent or incompetent, then serious consequences must follow, including removal."

But officials should not be routinely dismissed whenever things go wrong, as "doing so may give the appearance of solving the problem when that is not necessarily the case", he said.

At the same time, care must be taken that whatever actions are taken do not end up deterring public servants from innovation.

"If public officers had not dared to take risks for fear of being axed if things went wrong, we would never have built an exceptional country," Mr Heng said.

As for culture, he said each person must strive for quality and safety, and take pride in what he does.

"While some failures expose systemic weaknesses that must be fixed, others are caused simply by lax individual attitudes towards work," he said, highlighting the Japanese and the Swiss as examples to emulate.

"We must strengthen such personal mindsets at all levels of society... Though this imposes high demands on every Singaporean, we will persist on this path," he said.

"If we become complacent and slack, we are finished."

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SEE OPINION A29



Former princess Ubolratana Rajakanya has been named by Thai Raksa Chart Party as its prime minister candidate. PHOTO: THE NATION/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Thailand's King thwarts sister's bid to become PM

Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn intervened close to midnight to thwart his sister's surprise bid to take part in the country's March 24 elections, saying that it was inappropriate and went against tradition.

Former princess Ubolratana Rajakanya, 67, was the prime ministerial candidate put forward yesterday by the Thai Raksa Chart Party which is linked to ousted former premier Thaksin Shinawatra.

The King said: "Involving a member of the royal family in politics is considered as going against tradition and culture, and is seen as extremely inappropriate."

SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A6&8



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10 must-reads for today

1 Youngest coach is ready
At 33, Khidhir Khamis (right) is the youngest coach in 24 years of Singapore professional football. But he is ready for "something new and exciting" with Balestier Khalsa, who were sixth in the nine-team table last season. Khidhir was one of eight candidates, including four foreigners, to apply for the role but chairman S. Thavaneson had no hesitation picking him. **SPORT C12**



ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE

2 Heng rebuts commentary
Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat, responding to a commentary by Chinese daily Lianhe Zaobao, rejected the suggestion that the political leadership has "allowed the system to go slack" and failed to hold senior people accountable when things go wrong. **TOP OF THE NEWS A1**

3 Help from proximity grant
The Proximity Housing Grant, introduced in 2015 to help offset the cost of buying a resale flat for those opting to live with or close to their parents or children, has benefited more than 20,000 households. The eligibility rules, such as those for single applicants, were also relaxed last year. **TOP OF THE NEWS A4**

4 Committed to terror fight
Senior Minister of State for Defence and Foreign Affairs Maliki Osman reaffirmed Singapore's commitment to the efforts to combat terrorism, and emphasised the importance of international cooperation and intelligence sharing at the Meeting of Ministers of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS in Washington. **WORLD A23**

5 Battle to save Brexit deal
British Prime Minister Theresa May has failed in her attempts to renegotiate with EU leaders the draft treaty on Brexit. But she may be making some headway towards getting her Brexit deal ratified by her Parliament – not by persuading her European colleagues to relent, but by wearing down opponents back home. **WORLD A25**

6 Australia's telling silence
The absence of previous ringing support for America's leading role in Asia during a recent speech by Australia's Defence Minister Christopher Pyne points to how Canberra has changed its views on the US-China confrontation, says Hugh White. **OPINION A28**

7 Fewer parallel-imported cars
Registrations for parallel-imported cars have plummeted by nearly 40 per cent to 11,357. New emission regulations have been blamed for the plunge, but sales are expected to pick up this year with more models meeting the National Environment Agency standards. **HOME B1**

8 SingPost vows to do better
The rise in e-commerce means heavier loads for the postman, who delivers about 3,000 mail items a day. SingPost, which was fined \$100,000 for failing to meet government service standards, vowed to lighten the postmen's workload, improve service quality and address customers' grouses following a string of delivery issues. **HOME B3**

9 Boost in sales for Barbie
Mattel's iconic Barbie doll chalked up its highest gross sales in five years, in a nod to the company's efforts in diversifying the traditionally blonde doll to reflect more multicultural characteristics. **BUSINESS C5**

10 Singaporean's NY debut
Wong Kah Chun (below) became the first Singaporean to conduct the New York Philharmonic. The principal conductor of Germany's Nuremberg Symphony Orchestra conducted the orchestra's annual Chinese New Year concert this week. **LIFE D10**



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PODCAST

Budget preview

With the Budget 2019 statement coming soon, Ms Indranee Rajah, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office and Second Minister for Finance and Education, gives a preview. <http://str.sg/expect>



PODCAST

Fresh reads

We dive into Singapore poet Cyril Wong's phantasmagoric collection Oneiros, and Thai author Pitchaya Sudbanthad's centuries-spanning debut novel Bangkok Wakes To Rain. <http://str.sg/bookmark5>

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Police raid Wirecard's premises after fraud allegations

Global payments processing group says it is working with police to clear all allegations

Ng Jun Sen
Business Correspondent

PREMISES RAIDED

Police confirm that we have raided the premises of the Wirecard entities in Singapore.



A POLICE SPOKESMAN

WIRECARD DENIES ALLEGATIONS

The accusations against employees of Wirecard are unfounded and no criminal actions were conducted. Wirecard's internal compliance completed a review of this matter and found the allegations unfounded.



A WIRECARD SPOKESMAN

Police raided the premises of Wirecard yesterday following allegations of fraud at the local office of the global payments processing group.

The Straits Times understands that around 10 Commercial Affairs Department officers visited the company at about 10.30am.

In an e-mail to ST, a police spokesman said: "Police confirm that we have raided the premises of the Wirecard entities in Singapore."

A police vehicle was in the driveway when The Straits Times visited the office in Pasir Panjang yesterday afternoon.

Wirecard said it met law enforcement officers and provided them with "material in regards to their enquiry", adding that it is "working closely with the Singapore police to clear all allegations".

A spokesman added: "The accusations against employees of Wirecard are unfounded and no criminal actions were conducted."

"Wirecard's internal compliance completed a review of this matter and found the allegations unfounded."

An employee said the raid took

place at the Wirecard's accountancy and compliance departments at its office on the 14th floor of Mapletree Business City.

The firm has another office at Asia Square Tower 1 in the Marina Bay district, he added.

The employee, who declined to be named, told The Straits Times that the mood was sombre, although business at the sprawling office was proceeding as usual.

The Germany-based firm provides cashless payment services to several high-profile clients here.

It supports the payment of Electronic Road Pricing tolls via credit card and top-up services for ez-link cards using a smartphone app.

Wirecard also helped Singtel in its mobile wallet Dash and worked with ComfortDelGro to replace its in-house payment services with a new system.

Its other international clients include Samsung, Google and Apple.

The company said its operations and business partners have not been impacted by the allegations, which were made in a series of arti-

cles in Britain's Financial Times (FT) newspaper.

A report on Thursday claimed that senior executives at Wirecard HQ knew of a so-called "round-tripping" scheme orchestrated in the group's Singapore office. Cash was moved around between Asian subsidiaries to artificially pad the books, the report alleged.

The FT named Mr Edo Kurniawan, a Singapore permanent resident and one of the directors of Wirecard Asia, as a key executive who allegedly devised the scheme to "cook the books".

It also cited a whistle-blower from the firm who told the FT that two senior finance executives, Mr James Wardhana and Ms Irene Chai, were Mr Kurniawan's accomplices.

When The Straits Times visited Mr Kurniawan's West Coast home twice yesterday, a female occupant said he was on a business trip. She declined to say if he was still in Singapore, and said she has been told not to speak to the media.

Wirecard also declined to identify the individuals and the whistle-

The Germany-based firm provides cashless payment services to several high-profile clients here. It supports the payment of Electronic Road Pricing tolls via credit card and top-up services for ez-link cards using a smartphone app.

blower involved, stating that "we want to protect the company and in particular our employees and their personal rights".

The firm has called in law firm Rajah & Tann to conduct an independent investigation, which will be completed soon, said the spokesman. Wirecard has pledged to make the results public.

The spokesman rejected the FT reports of a 30-page document by Ra-

jah & Tann detailing allegations of "forgery and/or falsification of accounts" and suspected "cheating, criminal breach of trust, corruption and/or money laundering" in multiple jurisdictions.

Wirecard also said it would sue FT over the reports, according to news agency Reuters.

In a transcript of a Feb 4 conference call with investors seen by The Straits Times, Wirecard chief executive Markus Braun said he believes the Rajah & Tann document was a summary of allegations by the whistle-blower put together by the law firm before it was called in to conduct the investigation.

"Already today, we consider the whole issue as resolved, so we do not expect any material findings here," Mr Braun said in the conference call.

About 300 of the firm's 5,000 employees are based in Singapore. Wirecard also has a global compliance team of around 150 with some based in Asia.

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A police vehicle was spotted in the driveway of Mapletree Business City yesterday, where Wirecard has an office. ST PHOTO: NG JUN SEN



Over 20,000 households have received proximity grant so far

Vanessa Liu

More than 20,000 households have benefited from the Proximity Housing Grant (PHG) since it was introduced in August 2015, the Housing Board revealed yesterday.

As at the end of last year, 20,100 households had received the grant, 9,100 more than at the end of 2017.

The grant was set up to encourage family support by helping to offset the cost of buying a resale flat for those opting to live with or close to their parents or children.

A year ago, changes were made to the eligibility criteria so that people living within 4km – instead of 2km – of parents or children could apply for the grant.

Rules for single applicants and

parents of single applicants were also eased so that they could get a grant to live near each other, as opposed to living together.

Grants for those who choose to live with their parents or married children were increased by 50 per cent.

Ms Lim Zihui, 29, a medical sales representative who is married with three children, is one of those who have benefited from the changes.

Her family bought an executive apartment in Punggol last July, as their previous three-room flat was too small for them.

"We were looking for a place near my parents so that it would be easier in terms of logistics, like when we need help with the children," said Ms Lim, who was initially looking for a place in Pasir Ris until she

realised the radius for the grant had been widened.

"Moving near my parents is a wiser choice. On weekends when we need to go out and run some errands, we can ask my parents to come over to help out. Sometimes, they take care of the children or come over for dinner."

From August 2015 to the end of last year, some 20,400 households had applied for the PHG – making up 28 per cent of the 73,100 resale applications registered in that time.

Out of these 20,400 households, 83 per cent were families, with the rest being single applicants.

Approximately \$377 million has been disbursed to the 20,100 households under the PHG. The remaining applicants will receive the grants once their resale trans-



Ms Lim Zihui with her husband Royston Yap, 37, and their children – Nathan, eight; Nigel, eight months old; and Noelyn, 11 – in their Punggol executive apartment, which is near her parents' home. PHOTO: MONSTER STUDIO PHOTOGRAPHY

actions have been completed.

Singapore Management University sociology professor Paulin Straughan said: "As our society ages, it is so important that we have in place a social structure that promotes and enables ageing-in-place.

Having grown-up children live within close proximity will certainly facilitate a social support system where family can be the first responders in times of crisis or when assistance is needed.

"While we may not be in multi-

generational households – given our small living spaces as well as the value placed on privacy and preference for the nuclear-family structure by younger married couples – this housing scheme allows us to facilitate a new form of extended family – of generations within the neighbourhood."

Under the PHG, all Singapore citizen families who buy a resale flat to live with parents or children can receive a grant of \$30,000, while those buying a resale flat to live near them can get a grant of \$20,000.

Eligible singles can receive the respective grants of \$15,000 or \$10,000 for living with or near their parents.

All Singaporeans are eligible for the PHG once, regardless of their household income, ownership of private property or whether they have received housing subsidies previously.

However, private property owners must dispose of their private properties within six months of the resale flat purchase.

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German official rules out ban targeting Huawei over 5G

BERLIN • German Chancellor Angela Merkel's government has ruled out an outright ban targeting Chinese equipment supplier Huawei Technologies as Germany moves towards building its ultra-fast fifth-generation (5G) networks, according to a government official.

Cabinet members from Dr Merkel's administration met on Wednesday in Berlin to discuss the prospect of restricting Huawei equipment from the new 5G network.

While they continue to work towards a final decision, the ministers concluded that singling out Huawei from a list of suppliers was not legally viable, the official said on Thursday on condition of anonymity in accordance with government protocol.

Economy Minister Peter Altmaier has signalled that any restrictions tied to Germany's shift to the crucial next-generation technology will not involve targeting spe-

cific companies, but rather subjecting all potential service providers to stringent security standards.

Huawei has come under scrutiny by United States allies who are concerned that its equipment could be used by China's intelligence.

"I don't think this is about ruling out or not ruling out individual service providers," Mr Altmaier said last week.

The Interior Ministry will formulate a list of security criteria to determine the degree of scrutiny levelled on companies, which various ministries with competing interests will then have a chance to weigh in on. That catalogue will be completed in the next few weeks, the official said.

Auctioning for the country's 5G network is expected to begin next month. Telecommunications companies have warned about costs that would arise if Huawei were cut out of supplying 5G equipment.

Germany's Deutsche Telekom has warned that Europe would fall behind the US and China in 5G with such a move, according to people familiar with an internal briefing paper from the company.

"Irrespective of whichever telecommunications company receives a tender, they will in the end have to prove that they fulfil these security standards," Mr Altmaier said last month.

Meanwhile, the US envoy to the European Union said that any Western country allowing Huawei or other Chinese equipment to be used in critical infrastructure projects will face the risk of US countermeasures.

The warning adds to signs that US President Donald Trump's administration is pushing for a blanket ban on Chinese companies from new 5G wireless networks, autonomous vehicles and other lucrative contracts in the tech-

nology sector throughout Europe, North America and other American allies.

"There are no compelling reasons that I can see to do business with the Chinese, so long as they have the structure in place to reach in and manipulate or spy on their customers," Ambassador Gordon Sondland, Mr Trump's envoy in Brussels, said on Thursday in an interview.

"Those who are charging ahead blindly and embracing the Chinese technology without regard to these concerns may find themselves in a disadvantage in dealing with us."

Depending on the Chinese equipment used by Western countries, the US may have to be "more careful in sharing information, in transacting business", and a "host of things", Mr Sondland said.

He urged European countries to pick Finnish and other Scandinavian companies for their 5G contracts, citing a Chinese law that allegedly compels any private company in the country to cooperate with the government "on any intelligence matters in secret and without refusal". BLOOMBERG

SEE OPINION A29

Firm defends reputation at Europe meeting

BRUSSELS • In one of the strongest public remarks, a senior representative of Chinese technology giant Huawei on Thursday night rebutted fear-mongering against the company.

In a Brussels ballroom packed with more than 100 mostly European guests, Huawei's envoy to the European Union institutions launched into a robust defence of the company.

"Recently, Huawei has been under constant attack by some countries and politicians. We are shocked, or sometimes feel amused, by those ungrounded and senseless allegations," said Mr Abraham Liu, Huawei's vice-president for the European region and chief representative to the EU institutions.

"For example, yesterday, the US Ambassador to the European Union, Mr (Gordon) Sondland, said someone in Beijing (could) remotely run a certain car off the road on the 5G net-

work and kill the person who is in it. This is an insult to people's intelligence, let alone the technological experts across the world," Mr Liu said.

"Excluding Huawei from the market does not mean the network is safe. For example, since Huawei's equipment is not used in the US networks, is the US having the most secure network? The answer is no," he said.

The company has an excellent cyber-security record, Mr Liu said, with its devices being approved after going through strict reviews by multiple regulators and operators.

"There is a famous saying that 'I never knew an early-rising, hard-working, prudent and strictly honest man who complained of bad luck.' In Huawei, we believe the same. Complaints will not solve the issue. By working closely with our European partners, we are creating a better future for all of us."

CHINA DAILY/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

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Thai Raksa Chart Party leader Preechapol Pongpanit holding up Ms Ubolratana Rajakanya's application to be a candidate for prime minister in Bangkok yesterday. She is the sole candidate put forward by the party for the March 24 polls. PHOTO: REUTERS

King comes out strongly against sister's political bid

Nomination of ex-princess as PM candidate and his opposition shakes up Thai politics

Tan Hui Yee
Indochina Bureau Chief
In Bangkok

Twin shock waves shook up the political arena in Thailand yesterday, the first after the King's elder sister was nominated as a prime ministerial candidate ahead of the country's first election in eight years.

And the second, more than 12 hours later, when King Maha Vajiralongkorn came out to denounce it.

Former princess Ubolratana Rajakanya, 67, was the sole candidate put forward by the Thai Raksa Chart Party yesterday under a new electoral system that requires parties eyeing the premiership to name their candidates in advance.

Thai Raksa Chart is linked to Thaksin Shinawatra, the ousted former prime minister who is now a fugitive and living in exile after being convicted of conflict of interest.

The party is led by many former members of the Pheu Thai Party, which won the last election in 2011 but lost power following a military coup in 2014. Thai Raksa Chart is allied to the Pheu Thai, which is also linked to Thaksin, for the forthcoming March 24 elections.

In a palace statement read out on all Thai TV networks, the King said: "Even though she has relin-

quished her royal titles in writing, she maintained her status and carried herself as a member of the Chakri dynasty. Involvement of a high-ranking member of the royal family in politics, in whatever way, is considered an act that defies the nation's traditions, customs and culture, and therefore is considered extremely inappropriate."

The eldest child of the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej, then Princess Ubolratana relinquished her royal title at the age of 21 to marry a fellow student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

After the couple divorced in 1998, she returned to Thailand, where she continues to be treated as a royal.

Her activities are chronicled alongside those of her three siblings – including King Maha Vajiralongkorn – in regular television news bulletins on the royal family.

Her decision to enter the political arena was unprecedented in modern Thai history. No person so close to the inner circle in the palace has been so directly involved in politics since Thailand abolished absolute monarchy in 1932.

The sudden development had triggered expectations of a political deal and raised hopes of reconciliation in a country racked by bitter political rivalry between royalist, pro-military factions and

Thaksin-linked groups for more than a decade.

In statement posted on her Instagram account earlier yesterday, Ms Ubolratana had thanked the Thai people for their support.

"I want to see all of us have the opportunity to build happiness in our country."

"I would also like to clarify that I have given up all royal titles, and I am living as a commoner. Therefore, I would like to exercise my rights and freedom as a commoner under the Constitution, and I consent to Thai Raksa Chart Party's nomination as prime minister."

Meanwhile, current Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha yesterday announced that he had accepted the nomination of the Palang Pracharath Party to be its candidate for the country's top office. Mr Prayut said: "This decision is not easy because it comes at an important point for the country. I may be a soldier, but also love and am always ready to sacrifice my life for this country."

"I am determined to work with the people to move the country ahead to bring peace and reconciliation."

Earlier yesterday afternoon, a pro-junta politician had challenged the legality of Ms Ubolratana's nomination.

The King's statement last night, stressing that the monarch and royal family members should be above politics, appears to have put an end to his sister's political aspirations.

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News analysis

Thai politics enters new territory



Tan Hui Yee
Indochina Bureau Chief
In Bangkok

The fortunes of Thailand's Thai Raksa Chart Party – linked to fugitive former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra – soared yesterday morning, only to take a dive at night.

It had nominated the former princess Ubolratana Rajakanya as a prime ministerial candidate in the March 24 elections, pushing the deeply riven landscape of Thai politics into new territory.

It would have been the first time someone so close to the royal family was taking part in an election. Despite relinquishing her royal title in 1972, the elder sister of King Maha Vajiralongkorn continues to be treated as a royal in the country.

Analysts expected her entry to stymie Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha's bid to return as premier after the elections. The former army chief has been running the country ever since staging the coup that ousted a government run by the Pheu Thai Party.

But it was not to be for Ms Ubolratana. Around 11pm last night



Mr Preechapol Pongpanit (centre), leader of the Thai Raksa Chart Party which nominated former princess Ubolratana Rajakanya as a candidate for prime minister, speaking to the media in Bangkok yesterday. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

(midnight Singapore time), King Maha Vajiralongkorn issued a statement describing the involvement of royals in politics as "extremely inappropriate" and even unconstitutional.

The intervention leaves Thai Raksa Chart without a prime

ministerial candidate because the deadline for parties to name their candidates ended yesterday. The party could also be in legal peril if it is judged to have violated the rules by nominating a member of the royal family as a candidate.

Thai Raksa Chart, together with

its ally Pheu Thai, are seen as proxies of Thaksin, who was ousted in a 2006 coup and lives in self-imposed exile abroad.

Thaksin's sister Yingluck Shinawatra, who became prime minister after the 2011 election, is also in exile. She was ousted by a

court ruling before the 2014 coup.

Five years on, Mr Prayut is sitting in pole position for the position of prime minister after the elections, having been nominated for the post by the Palang Pracharath Party, in which four prominent former ministers in his Cabinet hold key leadership positions.

Critics allege that constitutional boundaries and other rules had been changed to favour it.

The Constitution, meanwhile, allows the ruling junta to pick most of 250 appointed senators who would join 500 elected Lower House members to vote on a prime minister.

For over a decade, Thai politics has been defined by the bitter divide between royalist pro-military factions and Thaksin-linked groups which fashion themselves as advocates for democracy but are sometimes labelled as anti-monarchy.

Some analysts had seen the nomination of the former princess as a possible bid for reconciliation.

The move had its critics. The youthful Future Forward Party, which vows to upend old-style politics filled with backroom deals, was sharp in its response.

"Politics should not be conducted through negotiations by the elite. It should be conducted according to the people's decision," its secretary-general Piyabutr Saengkanokkul said at a news conference yesterday. "We have potential members for prime minister, ministers and Members of Parliament. All are commoners who believe in democracy and the people's power."

Traditional reverence for the monarchy means that Ms Ubolratana, while stressing that she is a commoner, takes questions from presenters in a television variety show who are kneeling on the floor in deference.

Yet, in the world of strict decorum and hierarchy that

defines Thai royal life, she stands out for her accessibility.

She acts in films and television dramas, and readily replies to queries from the more than 97,000 followers of her Instagram account.

When her father, the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej, died in 2016, triggering a massive outpouring of grief, she mingled with mourners who gathered around the Grand Palace, distributing food and offering consolation. "He is my father and also everyone's father," she told the delighted crowd. "We must work together, move forward and not backwards."

King Bhumibol's death ushered in the new assertive reign of King Maha Vajiralongkorn, who once requested amendments to a draft Constitution that had been passed in a referendum.

Mindful of the lese majeste law – which prescribes jail terms of up to 15 years for any act that insults or defames the monarchy – analysts and pro-junta politicians have been treading carefully in their comments on Ms Ubolratana's decision to enter the political fray.

Even pro-junta politician Paiboon Nititawan, the leader of the People's Reform Party who was rooting for Mr Prayut's return as premier, was restrained when he requested yesterday that the Election Commission (EC) look into the legality of her nomination.

"This may violate the law which prohibits using members of the royal family in political campaigns. She is still a member of the King's family," he told The Straits Times, adding that, even if the EC gave the green light to her nomination, there would be "no positive or negative impact".

"These are just regulations to be considered," he said.

The EC has to endorse or reject candidates by next week. The King's statement now clears up uncertainty on this issue.

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Effect of lese majeste law on the polls

BANGKOK • The Thai monarchy is protected by one of the world's toughest royal defamation laws, making detailed discussion about its role almost impossible inside the kingdom. Former princess Ubolratana Rajakanya's entry as a prime minister candidate raises questions about how the media can cover her campaign, and even how analysts or the public can discuss her publicly. Here are some facts about Thailand's lese majeste law, or Section 112 of the Thai Criminal Code.

WHAT IS THE LAW AND IS THE PRINCESS COVERED?

Anyone convicted of defaming, insulting or threatening the king, queen, heir apparent or regent faces be-

tween three and 15 years in prison on each count.

Technically, the former princess would not be covered. She relinquished her royal titles after marrying an American decades ago, before divorcing and returning to Thailand. But she is considered a member of the royal family and performs royal duties, and Section 112 has been routinely interpreted to cover any aspect of the monarchy.

Prosecutions under the junta have dramatically widened what counts as lese majeste, with cases ranging from an academic who questioned a 16th-century royal elephant duel – the charges were later dropped – to a man prosecuted for satirical comments about

the dog of the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej. However, Human Rights Watch's senior Thailand researcher Sunai Phasuk said: "Nothing in the law indicates that it can be used to encompass other figures, including past monarchs or historical narratives connected to past reigns."

HOW WILL POLLS COVERAGE BE AFFECTED?

The former princess is a public personality who has appeared in films and concerts, and has an Instagram account. But given the way Section 112 has been broadly interpreted in the past, netizens and media outlets will think twice about what to publish. "In the very

near future, we are going to see lots of self-censorship among the media, in the public and private sphere," said Chulalongkorn University political science lecturer Kanokrat Lertchoosakul.

WHO ENFORCES ROYAL INSULT VIOLATIONS?

Prosecutions under Section 112 rocketed after the May 2014 coup by the junta. Anyone can make an accusation of lese majeste, and the police are duty-bound to investigate. Under the current regime, many suspects were tried in a closed military court, and there was no avenue for appeal.

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A popular royal celebrity who champions many causes

Ex-princess an avid social media user, film star and singer who works with youth and charities

BANGKOK • The former princess thrust into the limelight yesterday is a royal celebrity with an offbeat sense of humour.

Ms Ubolratana Rajakanya, 67, once asked people not to wish her “Song Phra Charoen”, or “May your highness be prosperous”. It could be a blessing to make her fat, she said in jest. “Say ‘Song Phra Slender’ instead,” she said.

Born in 1951 in Lausanne, Switzerland, her full name is Ubolratana Rajakanya Sirivadhana Barnavadi.

She has three siblings – the current King Maha Vajiralongkorn, 66, Princess Sirindhorn, 63, and Princess Chulabhorn, 61.

She relinquished her royal title on July 25, 1972, when she married American Peter Jensen, whom she met while studying at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

That year, an official announcement from then King Bhumibol Adulyadej’s principal private secretary, printed in the Bangkok Post, cited the young princess as telling the King that “the position of a Princess of Chao Fah rank entails special duty with a great burden involving heavy responsibilities, which she cannot bear, nor fully undertake. She, therefore, begs for His Majesty’s permission to resign from her rank and honours as a princess”.

Ms Ubolratana studied mathematics and biochemistry at MIT and earned a master’s in public health from the University of California in Los Angeles.

She is one of several royals to famously give up their titles for love, from Britain’s King Edward, who abdicated to marry American Wallis Simpson in 1936, to Japan’s Princess Mako, who has announced her intention to give up her royal title to marry Mr Kei Komuro, a lawyer.

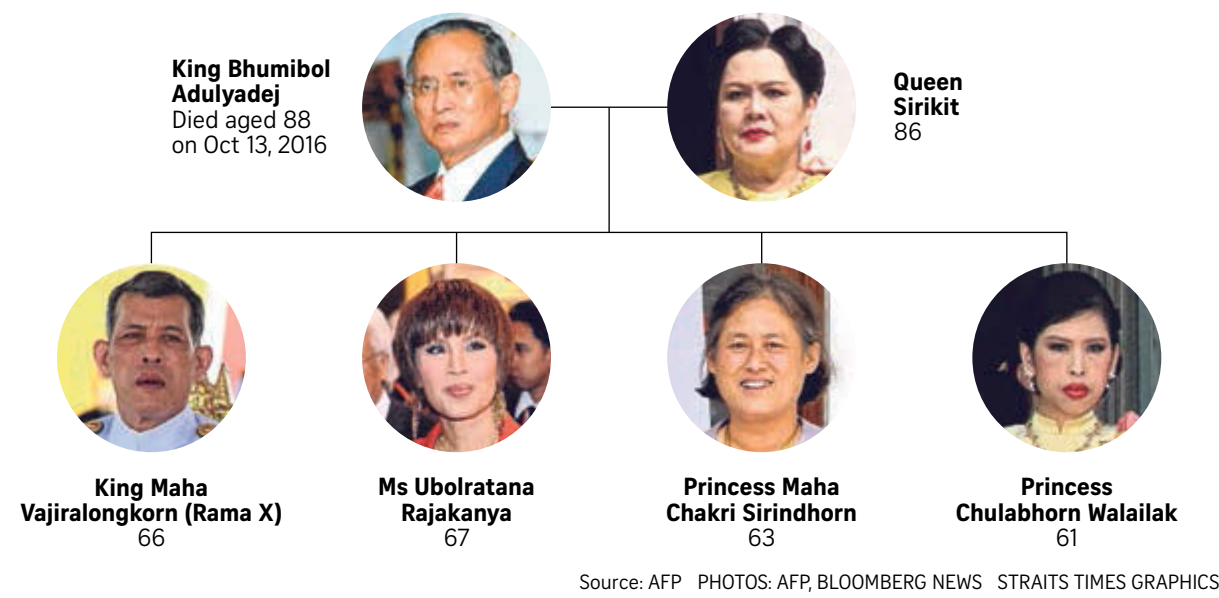
Ms Ubolratana lived in the United States for 26 years until 1998, when she divorced Mr Jensen and returned home.

The couple had two daughters, Ploypailin and Sirikitiya Jensen, and a son, Bhumj Jensen who died in the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami at the age of 21.

When Ms Ubolratana permanently returned to Thailand, she was bestowed the title “Tunkramom Ying”, which means “Daughter to the Queen Regent”. She is treated by officials as a member of the royal family.

But, in a statement posted through her Instagram account

Thailand’s royal family



yesterday, she stressed that she was a commoner.

Ms Ubolratana chairs four non-profit foundations championing anti-drug campaigns, support for autism and the poor, as well as other charitable foundations, according to the Thai Ministry of Culture. She also organises youth concerts.

She founded To Be Number One, a campaign to curb drug use and promote youth development. To connect with youth, she performed a popular ditty by girl pop group BNK.

In a speech to mark her late father’s birthday in 2017, she said: “In everything we do, we must devote our heart, our knowledge, every part of ourselves... Working with youth and with drugs, there are so many complexities behind it, but we have to work hard to help.”

Unlike her other royal siblings, she has a significant presence in mainstream media.

Her first foray into television drama was in 2003, reported news site Khaosod English.

She appeared in the television series Kshatriya as well as in Great King Saves The Land. Three years later, she starred in the series Anantalai.

She also starred in Thai films including Where The Miracle Happens (2008) – which was based on her book The Short Story Of Mine – and My Best Bodyguard (2011).

She told The Straits Times in 2008 that she refused a stunt double while filming a scene for Where The Miracle Happens involving a burning school house.

A long-time ambassador of the

Thai film industry, she is often seen at film premieres and festivals such as Cannes.

The former princess is also a singer, and performed the theme song for To Be Number One, her anti-drug foundation.

She hosts the To Be Number One Variety talk show by her foundation of the same name and the Mental Health Department. On the show, which airs on Saturday nights on state broadcaster NBT, she gives advice to youth, reported Khaosod.

Previously, she hosted a show titled Princess Diary on Thai TV.

Ms Ubolratana chose Singapore as the first country in Asia to launch her first movie in 2008.

She told The Straits Times that it was because “Singapore is very close to our country and it is a modern city which is moving forward very rapidly. As my work is cen-

AFFINITY WITH SINGAPORE

Singapore is very close to our country and it is a modern city which is moving forward very rapidly. As my work is centred on young people and helping the less privileged, I want to start with Singapore, which has a young population and people who are young at heart.



MS UBOLRATANA RAJAKANYA, on choosing Singapore as the first country in Asia to launch her first movie in 2008.

tred on young people and helping the less privileged, I want to start with Singapore, which has a young population and people who are young at heart.”

Ms Ubolratana is an avid social media user who has close to 100,000 followers on her personal Instagram page.

She periodically posts videos of herself singing and dancing during the Christmas holidays. She also recently posted videos of herself eating street food and another complaining about pollution in Bangkok.

According to the Bangkok Post, when the authorities were investigating a high-profile tycoon for poaching last year, and one of her Instagram followers asked her for advice on the case, she wrote: “We have to raise awareness that no one has more privilege than anyone else. Don’t forget that this country belongs to all Thai people, not particular individuals.”

Last year, a picture of Ms Ubolratana watching a World Cup football match with former prime ministers Thaksin Shinawatra and Yingluck Shinawatra, who are both in self-imposed exile, appeared on social media.

Yesterday, she turned to Instagram again after the surprise announcement that she had accepted the invitation from the Thaksin-linked Thai Raksa Chart Party to be its candidate for prime minister for the March 24 elections.

“I have undertaken this action with sincerity and a resolve to sacrifice for a chance to lead Thailand towards progress and prosperity,” she wrote on her account.



Ms Ubolratana Rajakanya, who gave up her royal title in 1972, greeting mourners after the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej’s death in 2016. PHOTO: THE NATION/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Key players in the elections

BANGKOK • As Thailand gears up for a return to democracy with its first general election since a military coup, here are the main candidates to become prime minister.

Mr Prayut Chan-o-cha, 64

The former army chief led the 2014 military coup which toppled former prime minister Yingluck Shinawatra and is the current Prime Minister of Thailand.

Mr Prayut began his military career in the prestigious Queen’s Guard unit, and assumed the helm of the army in October 2010. He is seen as a strong royalist and an opponent of former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

Mr Prayut kept everyone guessing as to whether he would contest the elections until he agreed to run as the candidate of the pro-military Palang Pracharath Party.



Dr Sudarat Keyuraphan, 57

The chairman of the Pheu Thai Party’s election strategy committee has been picked as its main candidate for prime minister in the March 24 elections.

The smooth-talking former agriculture minister stayed out of politics for 11 years – five while serving a political ban – before returning to Pheu Thai to spearhead the election efforts.

The long-time Thaksin ally helped found his now-defunct Thai Rak Thai Party, the predecessor to Pheu Thai.



Former princess Ubolratana Rajakanya, 67

The elder sister of King Maha Vajiralongkorn has been declared the prime ministerial candidate of the Thai Raksa Chart Party.

Ms Ubolratana has long broken the mould of Thailand’s royal family – marrying an American, singing pop songs on talent shows, taking on movie roles and posting on Instagram – but her entry into politics is her boldest move yet, breaking the longstanding tradition of Thai royalty staying out of politics.

The fact that the Thai Raksa Chart Party is linked to Thaksin has also raised eyebrows and is a blow to the Thai junta leader’s efforts to return to power after the polls.

Mr Abhisit Vejjajiva, 54

The British-born, Oxford-educated politician became Thailand’s youngest prime minister in 2008, but lost parliamentary elections in 2011.

Dubbed “Thailand’s Barack Obama”, he comes from a prominent family of Thai-Chinese origin and is now trying to stage a comeback for the Democrat Party after being re-elected the leader at a party assembly.

He is reportedly an old friend of former British foreign secretary Boris Johnson.



Dr Uttama Savanayana, 58

The leader of the Palang Pracharath Party has been named its No. 2 candidate for prime minister after Mr Prayut.

The United States-educated former industry minister is fronting the attempt to retain key policies enacted under the military government.



Mr Somkid Jatusripitak, 65

The current deputy prime minister is the third candidate to be fielded by the Palang Pracharath Party.

He was a co-founder of the Thai Rak Thai Party and also served as deputy prime minister, minister of finance and minister of commerce in Thaksin’s government.

After the 2014 coup, he served as the junta’s adviser on foreign economic relations. Since September 2014, he has been a full member of the so-called National Council for Peace and Order.



Mr Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, 40

The businessman turned politician is the leader of the Future Forward Party, and wants to shrink the military and reduce its influence in Thai politics.

Mr Thanathorn made his fortune in the car parts business as the executive vice-president of the Thai Summit Group conglomerate, which is owned by his family.

He is nicknamed the “billionaire peasant”.



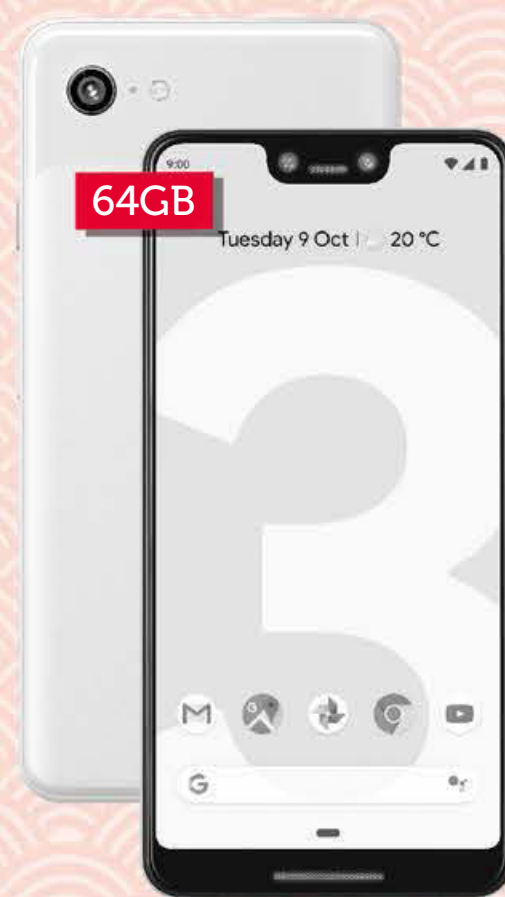


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Singapore Armed Forces personnel carrying the coffin of actor Aloysius Pang into Mandai Crematorium last month. His death is the fifth training and operations-related death reported in the SAF since September 2017. ST PHOTO: TIMOTHY DAVID



Parliament to closely scrutinise NS training deaths

Ng Eng Hen to deliver ministerial statement after MPs file 20 questions on SAF safety standards and training deaths

Adrian Lim
Political Correspondent

Training deaths and safety standards in the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) will come under close scrutiny in Parliament on Monday, with MPs filing a total of 20 questions on the matter.

The concerns about safety in the armed forces were sparked by the death of actor Aloysius Pang, who died on Jan 23 after suffering injuries in an accident during a military exercise in New Zealand.

Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen will deliver a ministerial statement in response. Mr Pang's death is the fifth training and operations-related death reported in the SAF since September 2017.

Ms Joan Pereira (Tanjong Pagar GRC), one of the 17 MPs who filed questions, hopes more light will be shed on procedures in the SAF for reporting near-misses, to catch loopholes in safety practices.

Said Ms Pereira, deputy chairman of the Government Parliamentary Committee for Defence and Foreign Affairs: "When it comes to safety, we should not be waiting for injuries or deaths to occur before taking corrective procedures, and near-misses can act as an important checking mechanism, among other measures."

Non-Constituency MP Daniel Goh of the Workers' Party (WP) asked whether national servicemen go through adequate training and safety refresher courses before taking part in exercises, and if the design of the Singapore Self-Propelled Howitzer – which Mr Pang was conducting repair work in when the accident happened – will be reviewed.

WP chief Pritam Singh (Aljunied GRC) filed an adjournment motion, "National Service – Balancing Operational Readiness, Safety and the Will to Fight", according to the Parliament order paper published yesterday. He will speak on national service at the end of Monday's sitting.

MPs have also filed questions on the Singapore Medical Council's decision to fine an orthopaedic doctor \$100,000 for not warning his patient of the possible side effects of a commonly used injection he gave her.

Dr Lim Wee Kiak (Sembawang GRC) wants to know what impact the decision would have on clinical practice, "if it is now mandatory for a doctor to outline and get the consent of a patient for every possible side effect and potential complications of a drug or treatment procedure".

The loss of O-level and A-level exam scripts from Singapore – in two separate incidents in Britain in 2017 and last year – is another issue that will receive an airing in the House.

Mr Zainal Sapari (Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC) is asking the Education Minister if his ministry would consider having the examination papers marked locally.

"Singapore's education system has matured enough and our teachers are recognised to be professionals in their own capacity. Our (mother tongue) language papers are already marked locally," Mr Zainal said.

During Monday's sitting, a Criminal Law Reform Bill will also be introduced. This follows proposals made by a Penal Code Review Committee to the Government last year, which include having harsher punishments for child abuse offenders and repealing the immunity for marital rape.

MPs will also debate five Bills at next week's sitting.

One of these is the Precious Stones and Precious Metals (Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing) Bill which, if passed, will require precious stone and metal dealers to conduct stricter customer due diligence checks when handling transactions. The stricter checks are among several measures proposed under the Bill to strengthen safeguards against money laundering and terrorism financing.

MPs will also debate proposed changes to the Tobacco (Control of Advertisements and Sale) Act. If passed, the new laws will require cigarette packs sold here to have a standardised drab, dark brown appearance, and prohibit the use of logos or promotional information on the packs.

The Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners (Amendment) Bill, meanwhile, seeks to raise the maximum fine for errant practitioners from \$10,000 to \$50,000, among other changes.

MPs are also scheduled to debate two motions concurrently, one of which calls for efforts to ensure Singaporeans age with purpose, in good health and with financial stability. The other calls on the Government and the community to continue strengthening support for caregivers.

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NUS to take in more poly grads with entrepreneurial abilities

Five polys here will each nominate up to 40 such students under special scheme

Sandra Davie
Senior Education Correspondent

Of the 7,800 undergraduates admitted to the National University of Singapore (NUS) last year, about 1,200 were polytechnic graduates.

The number is likely to rise further this year, with the university launching a special admission scheme for those demonstrating entrepreneurship abilities.

NUS, which runs a programme to nurture entrepreneurs in different business nodes of the world, has asked the five polytechnics to each nominate up to 40 students. These include those who have displayed a strong entrepreneurial inclination during their diploma studies as well as students who have participated in programmes that are related to entrepreneurship.

Those who do not meet NUS admission requirements will be considered under the Aptitude-Based (Discretionary) Admissions Scheme.

In announcing the new scheme yesterday, NUS senior deputy president and provost Ho Teck Hua said: "NUS is a forerunner and key player in Singapore's entrepreneurial ecosystem, and we hope to position Singapore strategically as a key node in our innovation and enterprise network."

"As part of this effort, we are constantly looking for students with entrepreneurial inclinations to provide them with a pathway to realise their entrepreneurial ambitions."

Those who are accepted stand to gain from NUS' active industry



From the new academic year starting in August, NUS students will also be able to design their own module, including how they learn and who they learn from, for one portion of their curriculum under the optional Design-Your-Own-Module initiative.
ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

partnerships and experiential entrepreneurial education, including the highly popular NUS Overseas Colleges (NOC) Programme, where students head to business and innovation nodes, such as Silicon Valley and Shenzhen, to intern in start-ups and take up courses in partner universities.

Since 2002, more than 2,800 NOC alumni have established over 370 companies globally, more than a dozen of which have been acquired.

The admission chances for polytechnic students will also be



NURTURING SPIRIT OF ENTERPRISE

NUS is a forerunner and key player in Singapore's entrepreneurial ecosystem, and we hope to position Singapore strategically as a key node in our innovation and enterprise network. As part of this effort, we are constantly looking for students with entrepreneurial inclinations to provide them with a pathway to realise their entrepreneurial ambitions.



NUS SENIOR DEPUTY PRESIDENT AND PROVOST HO TECK HUA

boosted by yet another scheme – the bonus admission points scheme. Last year, to encourage and support students to pursue their passions, NUS awarded 1.25 bonus admission points to A-level students applying for their first-choice programmes. That resulted in 9 per cent more A-level applicants – about 700 students – being offered admission to their top-choice courses.

An analysis revealed that students who were admitted into their first-choice courses through the bonus admission points scheme are

doing as well as students who were admitted into the same courses without the bonus points.

Following these encouraging results, NUS will be extending the scheme to students with polytechnic and International Baccalaureate qualifications this year.

Professor Ho also announced that from the new academic year starting in August, NUS students will be able to design their own module, including how they learn and who they learn from, for one portion of their curriculum.

Under the optional Design-Your-Own-Module initiative, undergraduate students may take up to four modular credits from their Unrestricted Electives Modules to pursue subjects that contribute to their personal and professional growth.

Students have to organise themselves into a group of at least 10 and submit a proposal to an NUS faculty mentor for review and approval. They can either invite a guest speaker from the industry to tutor them on a subject – for instance, fintech, urban sustainability or the fine arts – or select modules from a suite of online courses offered by edX, a not-for-profit massive open online course provider.

Prof Ho said the new initiatives are designed to encourage students to take greater ownership of their learning and pursue their passions.

He said students who enjoy what they are learning tend to be more motivated and are more likely to do well and, at NUS, the faculty constantly looks at ways to encourage students to embrace lifelong learning and pursue their passions.

He said: "In the new academic year, we are doubling our efforts by offering students the flexibility to chart their own learning journeys and opening access to NUS' unique entrepreneurial education pathway to poly graduates. In the long run, we hope to nurture highly motivated, self-directed learners."

The polytechnics welcomed the move by NUS to attract their graduates who have an interest in entrepreneurship.

In a joint statement, they said it paves the way for polytechnic students with an aptitude for entrepreneurship to continue to develop their skills, work on their start-ups and build relevant internship experiences from the polytechnic years to the university years.

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Fresh content across all platforms

Readers can look forward to fresh content across various platforms as The Straits Times operates from a revamped newsroom with new facilities. Here is what to expect.

Asian Insider

This e-mail newsletter summarises the day's top news in Asia in a smart, snappy read.

Content is drawn from reports by ST's network of over 30 correspondents in Asia, Europe and the United States.

Sign up for the weekday newsletter.



str.sg/newsletters



Video: 200 years in 200 seconds

Catch the special series marking Singapore's bicentennial year.

The first-parter captures milestones in Singapore's history in 200 seconds. See rare images – including the earliest surviving drawing of Singapore – come alive in the video, thanks to special effects.

Five more videos are in the works, on topics like heritage foods and fashion.



str.sg/sg200

Podcasts

Get some quick financial tips from the popular Money Hacks series, or tune in to A Game Of Two Halves if you are a sports fan.

ST now offers eight podcast series, on topics ranging from finance and health to lifestyle.



str.sg/stpodcasts



New multimedia content from new ST newsroom

Video, podcast offerings among fresh content from revamped space with new facilities

Tee Zhuo

New year, new newsroom – and new products and content.

Readers – and viewers – can look forward to more multimedia content across various platforms as The Straits Times gets down to work in a revamped newsroom with new facilities.

The newsroom in Toa Payoh North underwent its first complete renovation since 2002.

The features include a central hub for key editors, which makes it easier for them to collaborate on cross-desk, multi-platform projects.

A state-of-the-art video production and editing lab will be ready next month.

“Our purpose in revamping our newsroom is clear and simple: to serve our audience better by producing content across platforms that they value,” said Straits Times editor Warren Fernandez, who is also editor-in-chief of Singapore Press Holdings’ English/Malay/Tamil Media (EMTM) Group.

“We will be rolling these out in the weeks and months to come. We hope people will enjoy them, and send us their feedback and views, so that we can keep striving to improve things as we go along.”

SOME NEW OFFERINGS TO CHECK OUT:

VIDEO

Kicking off this year’s special video offerings is a series on Singapore’s bicentennial year with the theme “200 years in 200 seconds”.

The series was launched yesterday with the release of the first of six videos, which succinctly captures key milestones in Singapore’s history in 200 seconds, through rare pictures from as far back as 1819.

These old images, which include the earliest surviving drawing of Singapore, literally come alive in the video, thanks to special effects.

The other videos in the series cover topics such as heritage foods and fashion.

The video team, with more than 20 people, has been ramping up video production and experimenting with different formats.

These are part of The Straits Times’ strategy to engage younger readers and overseas audiences, said Mr Eugene Leow, head of digital strategy for the EMTM Group.

“Consumption habits are changing towards more visual formats,” he said. “Singaporeans are already familiar with bylines from our brand-name journalists – we want to give them more channels to share their expertise and perspectives.”

ASIAN INSIDER

It is a turbulent time in geopolitics. Many are looking for insights from seasoned political watchers on what to make of major developments.

Here is where ST’s growing network of correspondents around Asia comes in – to provide not only up-to-date news reports, but also an insider’s perspective on events in this part of the world.

Mr Fernandez said: “Many readers turn to us for an objective reading on developments in Asia. They want an insider’s perspective and insights.”

“They value our coverage because we can stay neutral on events in China, Japan, Korea, India, Southeast Asia, and how these relate to each other, as well as with the United States. Few others join the dots in that way.”

A new Asian Insider newsletter has been launched to meet this need. The weekday newsletter comes with a bite-size digest to help put in context the biggest news on Asia.

ST foreign editor Jeremy Au Yong said: “We wanted to find a way to further tap our correspondents – our insiders – to help our readers make sense of the fast-changing region.”

Sign up for the newsletter at <http://str.sg/newsletters>

PODCASTS

In the era of one-minute videos, audio-based media may seem like a nostalgic relic of the past. But it has been making a comeback – in the form of podcasts.

Starting with just two podcasts in March last year, ST now offers eight monthly. Four of these are posted every week, and the rest either monthly or fortnightly. Each podcast runs for around 10 minutes.

Said Mr Ernest Luis, head of podcast productions: “Right from the start, we aimed for conversational and punchy podcast formats.”

Money Hacks, a joint podcast with The Business Times now into its second season, is the top-performing series. The podcast, available on Mondays, offers financial tips.

Other offerings include A Game Of Two Halves, a sports podcast on Tuesdays featuring ST sports journalists, and Life Picks on Thursdays, featuring lifestyle events.

All the podcasts can be found at <http://str.sg/stpodcasts>

They are also available on Spotify, Apple iTunes and Google Podcasts, as well as for Google Home smart speakers and the Google News online platform.

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Artist's Impression

WORLD



PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA
INDIA'S CONGRESS LEADER
SHARPLY ASSAILED BY BJP **A18**

NOT GIVING IN TO BLACKMAIL

Rather than capitulate to extortion and blackmail, I've decided to publish exactly what they sent me, despite the personal cost and embarrassment they threaten.



MR JEFF BEZOS, Amazon.com chief executive, in a post on Medium.

STANDING UP TO EXTORTIONISTS

Any personal embarrassment AMI could cause me takes a back seat because there's a much more important matter involved here. If, in my position, I can't stand up to this kind of extortion, how many people can?



MR BEZOS



Amazon chief executive Jeff Bezos says American Media Inc, which owns The National Enquirer, wanted him to stop looking into how his private text messages and photos with his mistress were leaked to the tabloid, for political reasons. He pointed to the publisher's past cooperation with President Donald Trump, as well as its connections to the government of Saudi Arabia. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Jeff Bezos accuses US tabloid of blackmail

Amazon CEO says it threatened to publish risque photos if he did not drop probe into source of leak

SEATTLE • Mr Jeff Bezos, Amazon's chief executive, has accused the owner of The National Enquirer of trying "extortion and blackmail" to stop his investigation into how his private text messages and photos with his mistress were leaked to the tabloid.

In an extraordinarily personal online post on Thursday, Mr Bezos said intermediaries of Mr David Pecker, chairman of American Media Inc (AMI), the owner of The Enquirer, had approached him to stop his investigation. Mr Bezos said he had been told that if he refused, the publisher would make risque and intimate photos of him and his mistress, Ms Lauren Sanchez, public.

Mr Bezos said AMI had wanted him to stop looking into it for political reasons. He pointed to the publisher's past cooperation with President Donald Trump, as well as its connections to the government of Saudi Arabia.

Mr Bezos owns The Washington Post, which has relentlessly reported on the murder last year of its columnist Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi dissident.

The Enquirer pushed the multibillionaire into the headlines with its Jan 28 edition, which hit newsstands and supermarket racks on Jan 10.

The tabloid devoted 11 pages to the story of Mr Bezos' affair with Ms Sanchez, a former host of the Fox show So You Think You Can Dance, calling it "the biggest investigation in Enquirer history!"

The article also included amorous text messages that Mr Bezos had sent to Ms Sanchez.

His tying of The Enquirer's motive to politics, Mr Bezos alleged in a

post on online publishing platform Medium on Thursday, prompted associates of Mr Pecker to threaten to publish graphic photos it had apparently obtained, as well as more of the steamy text messages.

"Of course I don't want personal photos published, but I also won't participate in their well-known practice of blackmail, political favours, political attacks and corruption," Mr Bezos wrote of AMI, explaining why he decided to speak out. "I prefer to stand up, roll this log over and see what crawls out."

Mr Bezos' online post details a stunning and bizarre clash between the world's richest man and the nation's biggest tabloid publisher.

In it, all of the country's obsessions of recent years appear to have collided, from the personal lives of billionaires and sensational tabloid headlines to Mr Trump's fight with the media.

It has also shown that even for one of the world's most powerful tech titans and the owner of one of the country's most influential newspapers, the best means of communications can be a simple blog post.

And, in a time, when Beltway pundits complain that the public has lost its capacity to be shocked, Mr Bezos' post did exactly that.

Amazon declined to comment. AMI did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The confrontation began last month when Mr Bezos and his wife MacKenzie announced that they were getting divorced.

The couple, who have been married for 25 years, disclosed their separation just before The Enquirer published the article exposing that Mr Bezos was having an affair with Ms Sanchez, who is also married.

Mr Bezos, who has kept his personal life largely out of the public eye, said in his post that he had then quickly "engaged investigators to learn how those texts were obtained, and to determine the mo-



Intermediaries of Mr David Pecker (above), chairman of American Media Inc, approached him to stop his investigation, says Mr Jeff Bezos.



The publisher of The National Enquirer threatened to make risque and intimate photos of Mr Jeff Bezos and his mistress, Ms Lauren Sanchez, public, says the Amazon CEO.

tives for the many unusual actions taken by The Enquirer".

He said he had turned to Mr Gavin de Becker, his long-time private security consultant, for help.

In recent interviews, including with The Daily Beast and The Washington Post, Mr de Becker said he was investigating whether Ms Sanchez's brother, who has said he supports Mr Trump, may have been behind the leak for political reasons.

Those who support the President may have been motivated to move against Mr Bezos since Mr Trump has long criticised the billionaire.

Mr Trump has previously linked The Post and Amazon in critical Twitter posts, once declaring the "Fake Washington Post" a "lobbyist" for Amazon.

Mr de Becker did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In Mr Bezos' post on Thursday, he also published several e-mails between Mr de Becker's lawyer Martin Singer, and AMI's lawyer Jon Fine and chief content officer Dylan Howard.

The e-mails detail explicit photos The Enquirer had obtained of Mr Bezos and Ms Sanchez but had not run, and went on to say AMI would not publish the photos if Mr Bezos stopped his investigation and publicly said he did not think the leak had been politically motivated.

In one e-mail that Mr Bezos disclosed, Mr Howard wrote that The Enquirer had obtained photos of Mr Bezos and Ms Sanchez as part of its "news-gathering".

"Nothing I might write here could tell the National Enquirer story as eloquently as their own words," Mr Bezos wrote of releasing the e-mails. He added that any personal embarrassment from the revelations took "a back seat because there's a much more important matter involved here".

"If, in my position, I can't stand up to this kind of extortion, how many people can?" he wrote. NYTIMES

Excerpts from Bezos' blog post

SEATTLE • Mr Jeff Bezos, chief executive of Amazon, published a personal blog post on Thursday that accused the owner of The National Enquirer of trying to blackmail him in order to stop an investigation into how the tabloid obtained private messages and pictures sent between him and former television anchor Lauren Sanchez.

In the post, Mr Bezos said American Media Inc (AMI), The National Enquirer's parent company, was threatening to publish explicit pictures of him and Ms Sanchez. He also named Mr David Pecker, chairman of AMI.

The following are excerpts from the blog post:

WHAT DOES THE ENQUIRER CLAIM TO HAVE?

Mr Bezos published an e-mail he said was from Mr Dylan Howard, chief content officer of AMI. Mr Howard provided details about the pictures the company claimed to have. The list begins with a "below-the-belt selfie" and describes nine other images, including "a full-length body selfie of Mr Bezos wearing just a pair of tight black boxer-briefs or trunks, with his phone in his left hand, while wearing his wedding ring".

WHAT DOES THE ENQUIRER WANT?

Mr Bezos published an e-mail he said was from Mr Jon P. Fine, a lawyer for AMI, which included a list of demands, such as "a public, mutually agreed upon acknowledgement from the Bezos parties, released through a mutually agreeable news outlet, affirming that they have no knowledge or basis for suggesting that AMI's coverage was politically motivated or influenced by political forces, and an agreement that they will cease referring to such a possibility".

IS THIS POLITICALLY MOTIVATED?

Mr Bezos published an e-mail he said was from Mr Fine, who denied the threat was politically motivated but included a complaint about critical coverage by The Post.

It said: "AMI emphatically rejects any assertion that its reporting was instigated, dictated or influenced in any manner by external forces, political or otherwise. Simply put, this was and is a news story. Yet, it is our understanding that your client's representatives, including the Washington Post, continue to pursue and to disseminate these false allegations in a manner that is injurious to AMI and its executives."

WHERE DOES BEZOS' INVESTIGATION FIT IN?

Mr Bezos said he had been told that Mr Pecker was personally involved. Mr Bezos wrote: "Several days ago, an AMI leader advised us that Mr Pecker is apoplectic about our investigation. For reasons still to be better understood, the Saudi angle seems to hit a particularly sensitive nerve. A few days after hearing about Mr Pecker's apoplexy, we were approached, verbally at first, with an offer. They said they had more of my text messages and photos that they would publish if we didn't stop our investigation."

NYTIMES

Myanmar villagers flee Rakhine violence, cross into Bangladesh

Influx of refugees continues as families fear assault from military helicopters

YANGON/DHAKA • Scores of ethnic minority villagers have crossed from western Myanmar into Bangladesh in recent days amid fighting between the Myanmar military and ethnic Rakhine rebels, Bangladesh border guards and an activist have said.

Members of 38 families said they fled their homes fearing attack from military helicopters, said Colonel Zahurul Haque Khan, the Border Guards Bangladesh commander in Bandarban district, on Thursday. The group of 136 people are now living in shelters in the district.

Clashes between Myanmar's military and the insurgent Arakan Army, which mainly recruits from the Rakhine ethnic group, have displaced more than 5,000 people in parts of Rakhine and Chin states since early December.

Myanmar's leaders have vowed to crush the rebels, who are fighting for autonomy for Rakhine State, and blocked most aid agencies from reaching the area, raising fears of more civilian suffering in an area long scarred by complex ethnic divisions.

While Rakhine State is majority Buddhist, in 2017, attacks on security posts by insurgents from the Muslim Rohingya minority provoked a military crackdown that forced 730,000 people from their homes and into camps in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district, according to UN agencies.

Mr Win Thein, a member of the non-governmental Bangladesh Human Rights Commission, said on Thursday he had visited the refugees, who are members of the Khumi, Cho and Rakhine ethnic



Rohingya refugees at the Border Guard Bangladesh camp in Teknaf yesterday. A group of 136 people entered Bangladesh in recent days and are staying in shelters in the district as fresh clashes erupted between the Myanmar military and insurgent Arakan Army. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

groups, in their jungle camp.

They had crossed into Bangladesh on Sunday and Monday after fleeing from two villages in Chin state's rugged Paletwa township after they heard gunfire and saw helicopters nearby, he said.

Some villagers said they later witnessed Myanmar soldiers looting and setting fire to homes, he said.

Mr Win Thein said some of the refugee children were seriously ill and had no access to medical care.

"There are no blankets at all and it is very cold," he said.

State media in Myanmar said yesterday the Arakan Army had "taken about 200 Rakhine and other eth-

Clashes between Myanmar's military and the insurgent Arakan Army, which mainly recruits from the Rakhine ethnic group, have displaced more than 5,000 people in parts of Rakhine and Chin states since early December.

nic nationals, including 38 schoolchildren, to Bangladesh territory".

An announcement carried in official newspapers said the government was providing humanitarian assistance to displaced people. It also said the insurgents may have taken the people into Bangladesh to "create misunderstanding between the two neighbours".

Khine Thu Kha, an Arakan Army spokesman based outside Myanmar, said the armed group had helped the displaced villagers to reach the border, but did so because the villagers feared being detained by the military. The government was using "fake news" to cover up military abuses, he said.

Bangladesh summoned Myanmar's ambassador on Tuesday to protest over the new arrivals, according to a senior Bangladesh Foreign Ministry official.

Bangladesh had beefed up security near the border to prevent more refugee arrivals, Minister of Home Affairs Asaduzzaman Khan told reporters on Thursday.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh security forces stopped 30 Rohingya refugees from being smuggled to Malaysia by boat, officials said yesterday, as fears rise that calmer seas may tempt those living in squalid camps to make the journey to South-east Asia.

REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

15 killed in China arson, knife attacks

BEIJING • Fifteen people were killed in China on the eve of the Chinese New Year in two family tragedies, after one man started a fire and another went on a knife rampage.

As people celebrated to usher in the Year of the Pig on Monday night, a man with the surname Lu set fire to the home of his brother in the northern province of Shaanxi, killing seven, according to police in the town of Baoji.

The brother, his wife, their fathers and their three children died in the blaze, police said on the Twitter-like social media Weibo platform.

A few hours after the incident police arrested the suspect, who had tried to kill himself.

On the same night, in a separate incident, a 49-year-old who suspected his wife of adultery stabbed eight people to death and injured seven in a village in the north-west province of Gansu, police in the commune of Baiyin said. The man, who has the surname Guo, has been arrested. The identities of the victims have not been released.

Knife attacks are common in China, where the carrying of firearms is strictly regulated.

Violent crime has been on the rise as the economy boomed in recent decades and the gap between the rich and poor widened rapidly.

Studies have also described a rise in the prevalence of mental disorders, some of them linked to stress as the pace of life becomes faster and support systems wither.

Last year, on the eve of Chinese New Year, a villager from Hanzhong in Shaanxi province killed three neighbours whom he blamed for his mother's death in 1996. His mother had died from intentional injuries caused by one of the victims in a dispute, a Xinhua report said.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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BJP sharpens attacks on Congress' Priyanka

Opposition party officials file police reports over offensive, sexist remarks on social media

Nirmala Ganapathy
India Bureau Chief
In New Delhi

It did not take the critics long to target Mrs Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who entered the political fray recently as general secretary of Congress, India's oldest party, in the key state of Uttar Pradesh.

Social media trolls and leaders from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have dismissed her as "bipolar" as well as "chocolatey" and said she was tainted by her husband,

who was questioned this week about a London property deal by the Enforcement Directorate of the Finance Ministry.

The social media attacks have led Congress officials to file police reports around the country against particularly offensive and sexist comments.

The women's wings of the Congress have filed a complaint in Delhi and in other states against "unknown persons" for "spreading distasteful and offensive tweets/pictures" of Mrs Vadra, 47.

One man, who was identified as



Mrs Priyanka Gandhi Vadra at a Congress meeting in New Delhi on Thursday. Social media trolls and leaders from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party have dismissed her as "bipolar" as well as "chocolatey". PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Yogi Surajnath, was arrested in the northern state of Bihar for posting an obscene tweet. He described himself as a supporter of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but local media quoted local BJP leaders as saying the man had no links to the party.

"Initially, it started off with a BJP person saying she was good-looking but I chose to ignore it. But then they (social media trolls) started talking about body parts. That is a different malicious campaign. You need thick skin to be in politics. But this is not fair. This is what makes politics an unsafe place for women," said All India Mahila (Women's) Congress president Sushmita Dev.

Mrs Vadra belongs to the illustrious Nehru-Gandhi clan, which has given India three prime ministers, in-

cluding its first one after independence, Jawaharlal Nehru.

His daughter, Ms Indira Gandhi, also became India's first woman prime minister, and her eldest son, Rajiv, took over as the country's youngest prime minister, at age 40, after his mother was assassinated.

Mrs Vadra and her brother, Rahul, the current Congress president who entered politics in 2004, are Rajiv's children. Their mother, Sonia, took charge of the party after Rajiv was assassinated.

Often described as a spitting image of her grandmother, Mrs Vadra has, over the years, said she wanted to concentrate on her family, raise her two children and stay away from active politics.

She had surfaced during election

time previously only to campaign in the family's constituencies in Uttar Pradesh.

On Jan 23, Congress announced her appointment as the general secretary in charge of east Uttar Pradesh, a key part of the politically important state that includes Prime Minister Modi's constituency, Varanasi.

Congress president Rahul, according to reports, said in a meeting that he did not expect miracles from Mrs Vadra in two months. He and his sister will hold a roadshow in Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh, on Monday and hold meetings with local Congress leaders. This will be her first visit to Uttar Pradesh since taking over as general secretary.

She remains untested politically, but the BJP apparently is taking no chances. Her official entry into the fray has made her the target of BJP campaigns, even though its leaders publicly maintain that it would have little impact on the party's electoral fortunes.

BJP general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya, in a dismissive tone, charged that the Congress lacked leaders and so had to bring in "chocolatey faces" to fight in the forthcoming election.

Senior BJP MP Subramanian Swamy said Mrs Vadra suffered from a bipolar disorder, while Bihar minister Vinod Narayan Jha called her "very beautiful" and then added that "votes cannot be won on the basis of beautiful faces".

Bihar's deputy chief minister Sushil Modi criticised the Congress for recruiting a "woman with

a tainted life partner".

Mr Vadra's real-estate dealings had hit the spotlight earlier but he was never charged of any crime.

This week, he was questioned in a money-laundering case.

The BJP campaign has mainly centred on accusing the Congress of propagating dynastic politics.

"The family is now compelled to drag other members of the (Nehru-Gandhi) family into their political party. She was always important in that party because it's a family enterprise," said BJP spokesman G. V. L. Narasimha Rao.

The Congress, in turn, has said the BJP is scared by the entry of Mrs Vadra, who can appeal to a cross-section of voters.

Analysts said that the main opposition party would have factored in the attacks on her as well as the questions surrounding her husband's real-estate dealings.

"There is no shadow of a doubt that once she took a prominent role, the spotlight would be on the husband. She would have anticipated it and the family would have anticipated," said Dr Sandeep Shastri, a political analyst and pro-vice-chancellor of Jain University.

But he said the intensely personal attacks, often seen in politics, could also backfire.

"These comments (against Mrs Vadra) may be music to BJP supporters... but not to people who are fence-sitters. I don't think you will bring people to your side by making acerbic comments," said Dr Shastri.

gnirmala@sph.com.sg

Indonesia's 'miracle plant' kratom raises health fears

Indonesian kratom grower Gusti Prabu (far right) tending to his plants in Pontianak, West Kalimantan. Kratom leaves (seen dried and shredded) have been hailed by some advocates as a miracle cure for everything from opioid addiction to anxiety.



PONTIANAK (Kalimantan) • The sweltering backwaters of Indonesian Borneo have become the unlikely ground zero for the global production and export of kratom, a tree leaf hailed by some as a miracle cure for everything from opioid addiction to anxiety.

Part of the coffee family, the leaf has been used for centuries in South-east Asia for its pain-relieving and mildly stimulating effects.

But it is now sold in powdered form and exported worldwide – alarming some health regulators who have raised concerns about its safety.

Kratom stimulates the same brain receptors as morphine, although it produces much milder effects.

"I take kratom and have had no problems. Every strain has its benefits – some help you relax, others can treat insomnia or treat drug addiction. Some help increase stamina," grower Faisal Perdana told Agence France-Presse.

Said fellow farmer Gusti Prabu, who now exports 10 tonnes of the drug a month: "Our ancestors used kratom and there were no negative side effects. It can help eliminate drug addiction and help people detox(ify)."

But its popularity is causing concern – the drug is unregulated, and has had little clinical testing to assess its safety or side effects.

Kratom is banned for consumption in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, though Indonesia allows its export in an unprocessed form.

Health authorities in the United States – the drug's top export market – have linked consumption of the plant and its derivatives to dozens of deaths, warning it could aggravate a deadly opioid epidemic gripping parts of the country.

Compounds found in kratom are opioids, which expose users to the same risks of addiction and death as illicit opiates, according to the

United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

But for farmers in Kapuas Hulu, West Kalimantan – the centre of production – demand for kratom is such that they have moved away from traditional commodities, such as rubber and palm oil, to growing the tree as a major cash crop.

At the main post office in Pontianak, the key trading post for this part of Indonesian Borneo, it is clear the health warnings have done little to dampen interest.

"Around 90 per cent of our shipments from West Kalimantan province are Kratom that's been sold to the United States," post office head Zaenal Hamid said.

As many as five million Americans use the drug and that number is growing, according to the American Kratom Association.

Data from 2016 showed that the region was shipping some 400 tonnes abroad every month – worth about US\$130 million (S\$176 million) annually at current global prices of US\$30 a kilogram.

Most kratom customers are reached through online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Chinese e-marketplace Alibaba.

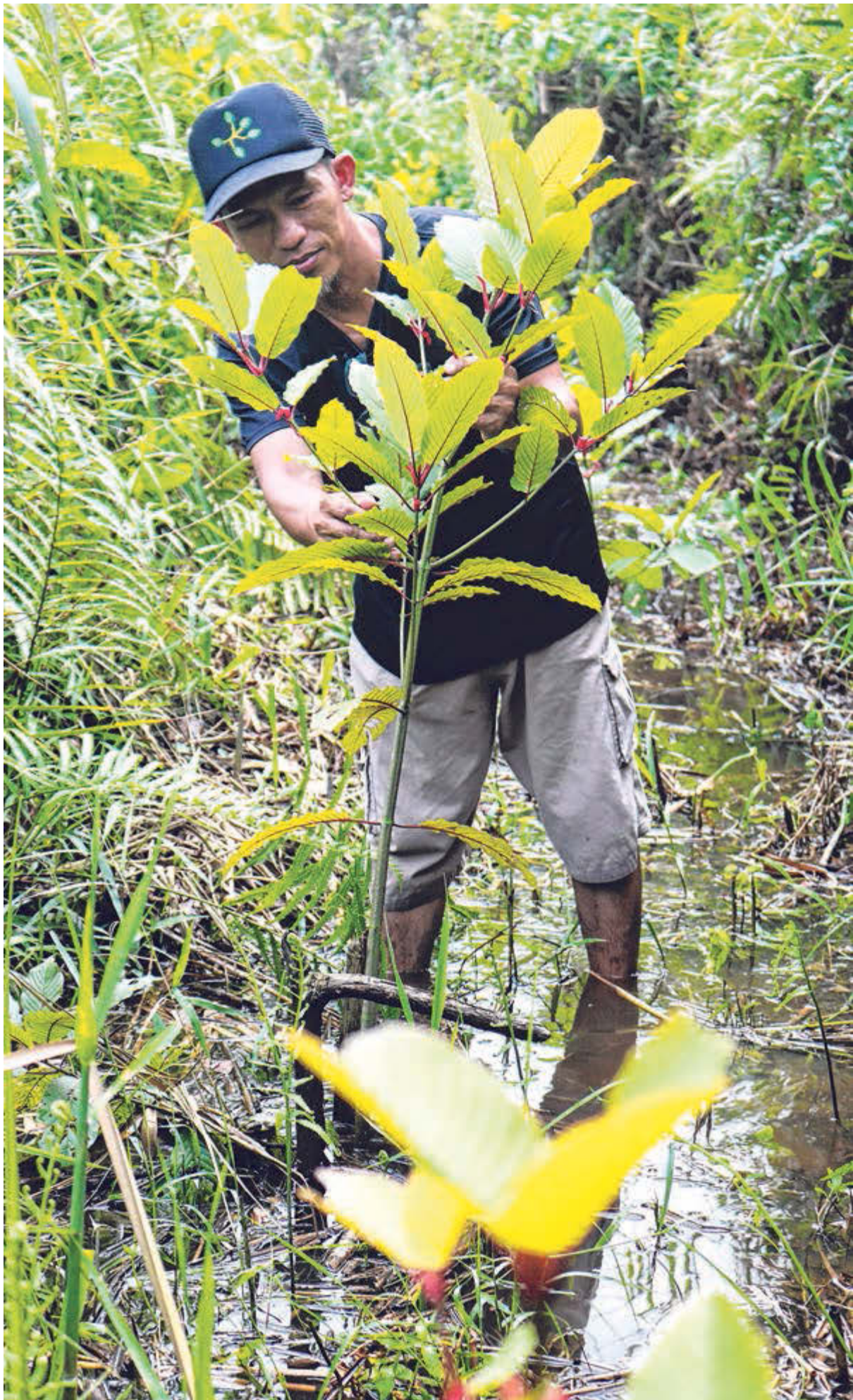
The trend for alternative medicine has been credited with increasing interest in kratom from Europe and America, where it is usually consumed as a tea or in capsules.

As the US struggles with an opioid addiction, fuelled by prescription painkillers and street drugs like heroin and fentanyl, kratom is legal in 43 states.

But the FDA is pushing for greater restrictions and has put an import alert on it, which means shipments entering the US can be confiscated.

It warned consumers not to use the drug and said it was "concerned that kratom appears to have properties that expose users to the risks of addiction, abuse, and dependence".

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Maldives seeks foreign aid to find cash linked to ex-president

COLOMBO • The Maldives government is seeking international help to find millions of dollars allegedly siphoned off by former president Abdulla Yameen, officials said yesterday.

He was charged with "grand corruption, theft and money laundering", Maldivian Democratic Party spokesman Hamid Abdul Ghafoor tweeted on Wednesday.

Maldivian diplomats said the authorities in the Indian Ocean archipelago were in talks with foreign experts as part of a police investiga-



Maldives former president Abdulla Yameen faces money laundering, theft and corruption charges.

tion against the leader, who lost power last September.

Mr Aslam Shakir, spokesman for the Maldives embassy in Colombo said police investigations had found evidence linking Yameen and his jus-

timinister Azima Shakoor to the theft of state funds and money laundering.

Last December, Maldivian courts froze about US\$6.5 million (S\$8.82 million) in accounts allegedly linked to Yameen, who suffered a shock electoral defeat to Mr Mohamed Ibrahim Solih last September.

Mr Shakir said millions of dollars could be stashed abroad and talks were under way with foreign entities to repatriate any cash found. He did not name the countries involved.

"We are getting foreign financial forensic help. We are also getting the expertise of others in connection with several cases of disappearances of people during Yameen's regime," Mr Shakir said.

An anti-establishment journalist, Mr Mohamed Rilwan, vanished in August 2014 and is widely believed to have been abducted by figures linked to Yameen's government.

Yameen, who had been in power since 2013, has also been accused of receiving close to US\$1.5 million in illicit payments during his failed

bid for re-election.

The country's monetary authority lodged a police complaint over alleged donations made into a private account held by Yameen in the run-up to the polls. The former strongman president, who has been questioned but not detained, has denied the allegations.

Yameen remains politically active. But since his downfall, almost all key dissidents have returned to the country and been cleared of convictions against them.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WorldBriefs

Najib pleads not guilty to money laundering

KUALA LUMPUR • Malaysia's former premier Najib Razak was yesterday charged with three counts of money laundering, amounting to RM47 million (S\$16 million), involving his three AmPrivate Banking accounts.

He pleaded not guilty after the charges were read out to him at the Sessions Court.

The charges come under Section 4 (1) (a) of the 2001 Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Terrorism Financing Act.

THE STAR/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

H1N1 virus kills 226 in India this year

NEW DELHI • The H1N1 virus has claimed 226 lives in India so far this year, and more than 6,700 people have been infected with the disease and are undergoing treatment, official sources said.

The situation is quite alarming compared with last year, with 798 cases and 68 deaths reported during the corresponding period of 2018. XINHUA

Ghosn to pay back costs of wedding bash

PARIS • Ousted Nissan chief Carlos Ghosn plans to reimburse the Chateau de Versailles for costs related to his Marie Antoinette-themed wedding party after Renault disclosed that its former chairman may have improperly used a sponsorship deal to host the event.

Ghosn will reimburse the palace, which will, in turn, compensate the French carmaker, a spokesman for his family said by phone yesterday.

The quick move by Ghosn to pay back the chateau contrasts with his stance in Japan, where he has rejected prosecutor claims of financial wrongdoing related to his time at the helm of Renault partner Nissan Motor. BLOOMBERG

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Canberra starts enforcing new decryption legislation

Law put into practice despite planned review with major tech companies yet to take place

CANBERRA • Australian security agencies have begun using sweeping new powers to access encrypted communications, even before a promised review to address concerns from the likes of Google, Apple and Facebook.

The powers were granted under a new decryption law which was rushed through Parliament last December amid fierce debate, and was seen as the latest salvo between governments and tech firms over national security and privacy.

Two months later, the Australian Federal Police have revealed that agents have already used it while investigating drug trafficking and child exploitation.

Australia is widely seen as a global test case for such laws, with possible applications by other governments seeking to counter the growing use of encrypted messaging, notably Australia's partners in the so-called Five Eyes intelligence alliance – the United States, Britain, Canada and New Zealand.

Under the new laws, refusal to grant the authorities access to devices is punishable with up to 10 years in prison.

The police told a parliamentary inquiry they used that threat to compel two suspects to hand over their passwords.

Citing secrecy provisions in the law, the police declined to say if they had used the new law to force device makers or telecommunications firms – including global giants like Apple – to break or bypass encrypted communications.

The same provisions bar industry from disclosing whether they have received such police demands, known as “compulsory notices”.

The government has argued that the law was urgently needed to foil ongoing terrorist plots and intercept communications among other serious criminals.

But opponents allege it punches a hole in global efforts to keep governments from eavesdropping on secure communications, like WhatsApp chats.

They also argue it could undermine security by creating vulnerabilities in encryption technologies, which could then be exploited by malicious actors.

The Department of Home Affairs said the law is being progressively implemented and that last month, it wrote to tech industry members for assistance in drawing up guidelines on how to use the new powers.

“The department is also engaging with industry to dispel common misconceptions, build confidence

Australia is widely seen as a global test case for such laws, with possible applications by other governments seeking to counter the growing use of encrypted messaging, notably Australia's partners in the so-called Five Eyes intelligence alliance – the United States, Britain, Canada and New Zealand.

and to reiterate the intended purpose and operation of the Act,” it said in a submission to the parliamentary inquiry.

But the tech industry appears far from reassured.

“There is no doubt there is an extremely broad coalition of stakeholders that are very concerned about the impact of this Bill,” said Mr John Stanton, chief executive of the Communications Alliance, which represents the Australian communications industry. “It is not just industry, it is civil society and digital rights activists (too).”

Mr Stanton warned that the new

law posed “an enormous threat” to export opportunities for Australian tech firms “because they can no longer provide any assurance that their gear hasn’t been tampered with by Australian security”.

Industry groups have combined forces to present a joint submission to the latest inquiry, proposing a series of amendments.

These include a higher threshold for using the law, which can currently be applied in any investigation of an offence carrying a maximum three-year jail term – a bar critics say is too low.

The industry also wants more precision about an element of the law barring the authorities from forcing companies to introduce a “system vulnerability” into their products – a term they say is ambiguous.

The tech industry alliance warned that the new law as written could force companies to take actions in Australia that violate laws in other nations where they operate or have clients.

And they issued a thinly veiled warning that the law could force major global companies to end or restrict their activities in Australia.

The parliamentary committee must complete its review by April 3, but any moves to then amend the legislation risk running up against the Australian electoral cycle, with a federal election due by mid-May.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Australia’s Parliament network hacked

SYDNEY • Australia’s Parliament has revealed that its computer network was compromised by an unspecified “security incident” and said an investigation was under way.

“Following a security incident on the parliamentary computing network, a number of measures have been implemented to protect the network and its users,” parliamentary authorities said in a statement yesterday.

Officials declined to comment on the nature of the cyber-security breach, but said there was no evidence that data had been accessed.

“We have no evidence that this is an attempt to influence the outcome of parliamentary processes or to disrupt or influence electoral or political processes,” the statement said.

“Our immediate focus has been on securing the network and protecting data and users.”

All parliamentary passwords were reset as a precaution.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he had been briefed on the matter, adding: “There is no suggestion that government departments or agencies have been the target of any such incursion.”

The Australian Signals Directorate (ASD) confirmed it was working with Parliament in response to the attack, a move that indicates sophisticated actors may be involved.

National broadcaster ABC reported that intelligence agencies were looking into whether foreign governments could be behind the attack, including China.

“ASD and its Australian Cyber Security Centre will continue to work with (Parliament) to understand the full extent of this network compromise,” an ASD spokesman told Agence France-Presse.

“Meanwhile, the necessary steps are being taken to mitigate the compromise and prevent any harm.”

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

‘Sea of dead cattle’ after Australia floods

TOWNSVILLE (Australia) • Hundreds of thousands of cattle weakened from a severe drought are feared to have died in record-breaking floods in north-eastern Australia as the authorities stepped up efforts to feed surviving livestock.

Incessant rain over a period of nearly two weeks has flooded swathes of Queensland state, with the full scale of the devastation in drought-hit cattle stations becoming clearer as flood waters recede.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison, speaking to reporters in Sydney yesterday, said: “We are expecting hundreds of thousands in terms of stock losses.”

“This will be heartbreaking to these communities that have been experiencing years of drought, only to see that turn into a torrential inundation, which threatens now their very livelihoods in the complete other direction.”

Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk yesterday spoke of seeing a “sea of dead cattle” when she toured one region on Thursday.

“To see the cattle spread across these yards, not moving. It made you feel sick in the stomach,” she told national broadcaster ABC.

Bales of hay and fuel have been transported into towns near the disaster zones and are being distributed to farmers so they can carry out airdrops to their stock.

Farmer Rachael Anderson and her husband, who manage Eddington cattle station near Julia Creek township, said 800 of their 1,500



Above: Cattle weakened from the severe drought in a flooded area near Julia Creek township in Queensland on Thursday. Left: A herd of cattle trapped by flood waters. PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

cattle were still unaccounted for.

She said: “The cattle didn’t have anywhere else to go... We’ve got a railway line close to us and the whole railway line is just tangled with dead cattle.”

“If the flood water wasn’t enough to kill them, then those that got to higher areas were exposed to elements that were not conducive, like rain hitting them at 60kmh. They can’t survive them long term.”

Ms Anderson – who had been hand-feeding cattle over the past few months amid the crippling drought – said there were also many dead kangaroos as well as birds that were falling dead on the ground.

About half of Australia’s 25 million-strong cattle herd is bred in Queensland state, and graziers said the floods – described as a once-a-century event – could devastate their industry.

Farmer William McMillan told the ABC: “This will finish a lot of people. There’s some people who’ve lost everything, every beast they own, so there’s no income at all.”

Australia’s tropical north typically experiences heavy rain during the monsoon season, but the recent downpours have seen some areas get a year’s worth of rainfall in just a week. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Instagram clamps down on self-injury images and content

SAN FRANCISCO • Instagram has announced that it is clamping down on images related to self-injury such as cutting.

The move came after British Health Secretary Matt Hancock met social media companies about doing more to safeguard the mental health

of teenagers using their platforms.

British teenager Molly Russell was found dead in her bedroom in 2017.

The 14-year-old had apparently taken her own life, and her Instagram account reportedly revealed she followed accounts related to

depression and suicide.

“It is encouraging to see that decisive steps are now being taken to try to protect children from disturbing content on Instagram,” said the girl’s father, Mr Ian Russell.

“It is now time for other social media platforms to take action to

recognise the responsibility they, too, have to their users if the Internet is to become a safe place for young and vulnerable people.”

Changes to Instagram’s self-harm content rules follow a comprehensive review involving experts and academics from around the world on youth, mental health, and suicide, according to chief executive Adam Mosseri.

“Over the past month, we have seen that we are not where we need to be on self-harm and suicide, and that we need to do more to keep the most vulnerable people who use In-

stagram safe,” Mr Mosseri said in an online post on Thursday. “We will not allow any graphic images of self-harm, such as cutting, on Instagram – even if it would previously have been allowed admission.”

Instagram has never allowed posts that promote or encourage suicide or self-harm.

The Facebook-owned service is removing references to non-graphic content related to people hurting themselves, such as healed scars, from search, hashtag, explore, or recommendation features. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

MORE EFFORT NEEDED

It is now time for other social media platforms to take action to recognise the responsibility they, too, have to their users if the Internet is to become a safe place for young and vulnerable people.



MRIAN RUSSELL, father of British teenager Molly Russell, who was found dead in her bedroom.

TRUMP'S SUMMIT DIPLOMACY

US President to meet one global leader, but not another, this month



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump at their first meeting in Singapore on June 12 last year.
ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

Can second Trump-Kim talks end Korean War?

SEOUL • The second summit between United States President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has raised hopes for the longest ceasefire in history to be replaced by a peace treaty.

Seoul and Pyongyang remain technically at war after the 1950-53 Korean War ended with an armistice.

Mr Stephen Biegun, the US special envoy for North Korea, said last week that Mr Trump was "ready to end this war", fuelling speculation that the formal end of the conflict may be near, with Mr Trump and Mr Kim meeting in Vietnam this month.

But analysts say a full peace treaty poses many complications, and will need extensive negotiations.

The 1950-53 Korean War ended with an armistice rather than a peace treaty, leaving the two neighbours technically still in a state of conflict.

The signatories to the armistice included the US-led United Nations Command, which fought alongside

the South's troops, as well as China and North Korea.

Declaring an end to the war was one of the agreements at the first summit between Mr Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in last year, but little progress has been made, with the US and the North at loggerheads over Pyongyang's nuclear arsenal.

In his New Year's speech, Mr Kim called for "multi-party negotiations for replacing the current ceasefire... with a peace mechanism in close contact with the signatories to the armistice agreement".

For Pyongyang, a peace treaty is vital to regime survival as it will mean "North Korea and the US are no longer enemies", said Professor Koo Kab-woo from the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul.

South Korea's dovish Mr Moon - with a slogan of creating a peninsula "free of war" - is also a supporter.

But Washington has been wary as the treaty could bring into question the justification for its military al-

liance with Seoul and the 28,500 US troops stationed in South Korea.

"The US fears abrupt changes to the regional order will impact its own interests, which won't be good as China flexes its muscles," said Dongguk University North Korean studies professor Koh Yu-hwan.

A peace treaty would be welcome news for Beijing as it seeks a "reduction of the US role" on the peninsula, Prof Koh added.

The possibility is very low, given the complexity of the issue. Prof Koo of the University of North Korean Studies says the deal would require "so many world-changing issues", from amending the Constitutions of the two Koreas to redressing the role of the US troops.

Dr Kim Dong-yub, an analyst at the Seoul-based Institute for Far Eastern Studies, added that negotiations for such a treaty may need more than three years.

The more likely scenario is for the concerned parties - North and South Korea, the US, and China - to declare a formal end to the war as a political statement.

Analysts offer differing outlooks but all agree on one aspect: An end to the war will undoubtedly trigger debate about the US troops in South Korea. AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE



US President Donald Trump said "no" on Thursday when reporters asked if he would meet his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping this month. But the US President said the two would "maybe" meet later.
PHOTO: AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE

No meeting with China's Xi before tariff deadline

WASHINGTON • United States President Donald Trump said he will not meet Chinese President Xi Jinping before a March 1 deadline to avert higher American tariffs on Chinese goods, intensifying fears the two will not strike a deal before the end of a 90-day truce.

Mr Trump responded "no" and shook his head on Thursday when reporters at the White House asked him if he would meet Mr Xi this month.

Then he added: "Unlikely."

But the US President said the two would "maybe" meet later.

Mr Trump told reporters last month that he planned to meet Mr Xi late this month, saying there was a "good chance" of striking a deal.

Time is running out for the US and China to reach an agreement before the deadline the Trump administration has set to more than double tariffs on US\$200 billion (\$\$271 billion) of Chinese goods.

While the US has said it is a hard

deadline for the tariffs, Mr Trump has also suggested he could agree to extend negotiations beyond the month's end if progress is made.

US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin are leading a group of officials headed to Beijing next week as part of the trade talks.

Mr Lighthizer told reporters last week that it was not certain a deal could be reached. Asian stocks tumbled yesterday on worries the US and China will not reach an agreement.

One senior official said the decision not to go ahead with a meeting should not be read as a sign the talks were breaking down. Rather, it was due to the amount of work that still needed to be done by negotiators. The two leaders could also speak by phone, the official said.

There is growing concern among officials that Mr Trump could agree to a cosmetic deal that would not address core issues like China's alleged intellectual property theft, ac-

cording to a person familiar with the talks.

But the President and other senior officials have publicly and privately stated the negotiations are going well and that the two sides are continuing to bridge their differences at every round of talks.

In a meeting at the White House on Wednesday, Mr Trump's trade team discussed the next steps for the trade talks, according to a person briefed on the matter.

Mr Lighthizer and Mr Mnuchin do not have a mandate to bring back a draft deal from their Beijing trip, the person said.

The President is headed to Asia to meet North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Vietnam on Feb 27 and 28.

A delay in the meeting between Mr Trump and Mr Xi is not a deal breaker, said Mr Derek Scissors, a China expert at the American Enterprise Institute.

Mr Trump meeting Mr Xi makes it more likely any deal will last.

"When it was agreed that they would meet, it was known at the time that it would be hard to match schedules before March 2," Mr Scissors said. "By itself, a delay until after March 2 is not a threat to the chances of a deal." BLOOMBERG

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WORLD

Maliki reaffirms S'pore's will to combat terrorism

ISIS still poses threat to S-E Asia, he says at meeting of global coalition to defeat group

WASHINGTON • Senior Minister of State for Defence and Foreign Affairs Mohamad Maliki Osman has reaffirmed Singapore's commitment to efforts to combat terrorism, and emphasised the importance of international cooperation and intelligence sharing.

Speaking at the Meeting of Ministers of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, hosted by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in Washington on Wednesday, Dr Maliki said that the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) militant group poses a clear and present danger to South-east Asia.

"Setbacks in the Middle East have only prompted ISIS to focus elsewhere, including in our region, where it has declared its intention to set up a *wilayat*. Just last month, ISIS-linked terrorists set off twin bomb attacks in a cathedral in south Philippines, killing at least 20 and injuring over 100," he said. *Wilayat*

refers to governorate.

"With over 1,000 foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria from South-east Asia, there is a very real threat posed by returning fighters and radicalised individuals, enticed by ISIS' pervasive ideology in cyberspace."

He highlighted the efforts by Singapore, the first South-east Asian country to join the coalition, in fighting global terrorism, both abroad and at home, including the SGSecure national movement, which "aims to sensitise, train and mobilise the community to play a part to prevent and deal with a terror attack", said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a statement on Thursday.

He also pointed out how Singapore has implemented a mandatory accreditation scheme, known as the Asatizah Recognition Scheme, to manage Islamist teaching in Singapore by only qualified Islamic religious teachers and scholars.



S'PORE'S EFFORTS

Efforts by Singapore, the first South-east Asian country to join the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, in fighting global terrorism, both abroad and at home, include:

- the SGSecure national movement which aims to sensitise, train and mobilise the community to play a part to prevent and deal with a terror attack.
- a mandatory accreditation scheme, known as the Asatizah Recognition Scheme, to manage Islamist teaching in Singapore by only qualified Islamic religious teachers and scholars.
- the Singapore Armed Forces' deployment of Imagery Analysis Teams, KC-135R air-to-air refuelling tanker aircraft, and medical teams to support the coalition's efforts.

Senior Minister of State for Defence and Foreign Affairs Mohamad Maliki Osman with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo at the Meeting of Ministers of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, in Washington, on Wednesday.
PHOTO: MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

rorism initiatives, as well as facilitate counter-terrorism intelligence-sharing cooperation in the region," said Dr Maliki, who was in Washington from Tuesday to Thursday.

During his visit, he met US Deputy National Security Adviser Charles Kupperman and Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale.

Both sides affirmed the robust and longstanding bilateral relations between Singapore and the US, and discussed the US' deepening engagement of the region in the areas of infrastructure, smart cities and cyber security.

Dr Maliki also met National Security Adviser to the Vice-President Keith Kellogg, Assistant Secretary of Defence for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs Randy Schriver, Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) Mac Thornberry and Member of the HASC Joe Courtney.

Both sides discussed ways to further advance bilateral relations, and exchanged views on developments in the Asia-Pacific region as well as ways to enhance US-Asean cooperation.

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Finland's income trial boosts happiness, not employment

HELSINKI • Finland's basic income scheme did not spur its unemployed recipients to work more to supplement their earnings as hoped, but it did help their well-being, researchers said yesterday, as the government announced the trial's initial findings.

The two-year trial, which ended a

month ago, saw 2,000 Finns, chosen randomly from among the unemployed, become the first Europeans to be paid a regular monthly income by the state that was not reduced if they found work.

Finland, which will hold parliamentary elections in April, is exploring alternatives to its current social

security model. The project is being watched closely by other governments who see a basic income as a way of encouraging the unemployed to take up often low-paid or temporary work without fear of losing their benefits.

That could help reduce dependence on the state and cut welfare

costs, especially as greater automation sees humans replaced in the workforce.

Finland's Minister of Health and Social Affairs Pirkko Mattila said the impact on employment of the monthly pay cheque of €560 (\$860) "seems to have been minor on the grounds of the first trial year".

But those in the trial reported they were happier and healthier than the control group.

"The basic income recipients of the test group reported better well-being in every way in comparison with the comparison group," chief researcher Olli Kangas said.

Ms Sini Marttinen, 36, said knowing her basic income was guaranteed had given her enough confidence to open a restaurant with two friends during the trial period.

The former IT consultant had been unemployed for nearly a year before "winning the lottery", as she described the trial.

"You kind of got this idea you have two years, you have the security of €560 per month... It gave me the security to start my own business," she said.

The basic income was only €50 a month more than her jobless benefit had been, "but in an instant, you lose the bureaucracy, the report-

ing", she said.

Ms Mira Jaskari, 36, who briefly found a job during the trial delivering newspapers but lost it due to poor health, said losing the basic income left her feeling more insecure about money.

The centre-right government's original plan was to expand the basic income scheme after two years as it tries to combat unemployment, which has been persistently high for years but reached a 10-year low of 6.6 per cent last December.

It took a different tack last year, however, by imposing benefits sanctions on unemployed people who refused work. REUTERS

ISIS 'caliphate' down to 1% of original size

Kurdish-led assault on militant group's last patch of territory in east Syria looms

BEIRUT • The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria's (ISIS) "caliphate" has shrunk to less than 1 per cent of its original size, the US-led coalition has said, as a final onslaught in eastern Syria loomed.

Kurdish-led forces spearheading the offensive have paused operations, but United States President Donald Trump predicted on Wednesday that a final declaration of victory would come next week.

At its height, the hardline proto-state proclaimed by ISIS in June 2014 straddled swathes of land in Syria and Iraq and was roughly the size of Britain.

Major-General Christopher Ghika, the coalition's deputy commander, on Thursday described the size of the last ISIS pocket as "now less than 1 per cent of the original caliphate".

The coalition has been training and providing aerial support to the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which launched an offensive on the last patch of militant territory last September. Two months later, they took Hajin, which was the last town of note under ISIS control and left



A destroyed hospital in Hajin, Syria, which was liberated from the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria last month. More than 37,000 people, mostly wives and children of hardline fighters, have fled ISIS territory since the Syrian Democratic Forces, backed by a US-led coalition, intensified its offensive against the militant group last December. PHOTO: NYTIMES

the militants fighting over a scattering of hamlets in the Euphrates River Valley.

Thousands of suspected ISIS fighters have attempted to blend in with civilians fleeing the militant group's battered last bastion, including a large number of foreigners.

"They are attempting to escape through intermixing with the innocent women and children attempting to flee the fighting," Maj-Gen Ghika said in a statement.

The SDF has set up screening centres to process the droves of haggard people streaming out of ISIS-held territory, often famished and covered in dust. US, French, British and other forces are also actively looking for wanted ISIS operatives among those fleeing the combat zone with civilians.

After weeks of advancing steadily, the SDF halted its ground assault on ISIS' tiny remaining enclave last week, saying the militants were increasingly using civilians as human shields.

The Kurds, who have de facto semi-autonomy in north-eastern Syria, are also engaged in behind-the-scenes diplomatic talks over

the fate of the region.

Mr Trump said last December that he had ordered a complete troop withdrawal from Syria, a shock announcement that left the Kurds scrambling for new allies.

Speaking at the State Department on Wednesday, Mr Trump said that US-led troops and their Kurdish allies should formally announce the end of the "caliphate" some time next week.

"Remnants - that's all they have, remnants - but remnants can be very dangerous," Mr Trump said. "Rest assured, we'll do what it takes to defeat every ounce and every last person within the ISIS madness."

The Wall Street Journal reported the complete US pullout will happen by the end of April.

Unless the Trump administration alters course, the military plans to pull a significant portion of its 2,000 troops out by the middle of next month, with a full withdrawal coming by the end of April, the newspaper said on Wednesday.

The Pentagon declined to comment on the plans.

While ISIS will soon no longer have fixed positions anywhere in

Iraq or Syria, its surviving fighters have reverted to guerilla warfare and remain a potent force.

The militants maintain sleeper cells, including along the border with Iraq and in cities they once ruled, and have carried out periodic hit-and-run attacks.

The Observatory said 63 suspected militants in the Syrian city of Raqqa on Thursday during an operation against militant sleeper cells, it said in a statement.

At least 48 suspected ISIS members were among them, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The Observatory said suspected ISIS sleeper cells have allegedly assassinated at least 50 civilians and 135 SDF fighters in Kurdish-held territory since August.

More than 37,000 people, mostly wives and children of hardline fighters, have fled ISIS territory since the SDF, backed by the US-led coalition, intensified its offensive last December, according to the Observatory, which said that figure includes some 3,200 suspected militants.

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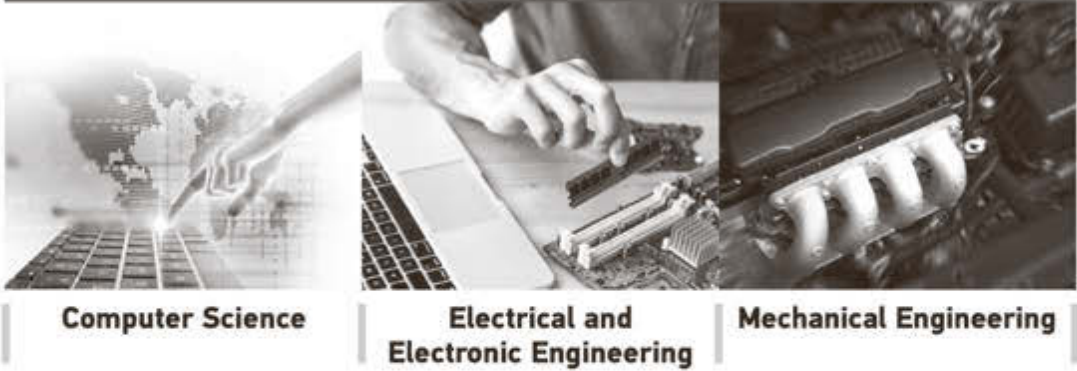
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Ex-Costa Rican president accused of sexual misconduct

SAN JOSE • More allegations of sexual misconduct have been made against Nobel Peace Prize winner and former Costa Rican president Oscar Arias, with five women saying he harassed or assaulted them.

The women's claims have threatened the reputation of the two-time president, who is one of Latin America's most respected statesmen and who won a Nobel Peace Prize in 1987 for his role in negotiating an end to civil wars in the region.

Anti-nuclear activist Alexandra Arce was the first woman to come forward in what has quickly become one of the most prominent examples of the #MeToo movement in Latin America, where activism has been more focused so far on ending violence against women and femicide.

Mr Arias has denied Ms Arce's allegations through his lawyer. On Thursday, the lawyer, Mr Erick Ramos, told Reuters that Mr Arias declined to comment on the subsequent allegations.

Ms Arce's decision inspired more



More women have come forward since the first accusation was made against Mr Oscar Arias.

women to speak out, including Ms Emma Daly, communications director for international rights group Human Rights Watch.

Ms Daly said she was working as a journalist in Central America in 1990 when Mr Arias approached her and a group of fellow reporters in a hotel lobby in Managua. She called out a question to him.

"He stopped, looked at me, and instead of answering my question, just reached forward with his hand, touched my chest and then pulled his hand down between my breasts and said 'you're not wearing a bra', or words to that effect, and then moved on," Ms Daly said on Thursday.

"The fact that he has an incredi-

bly impressive professional resume does not give him licence to treat other people in this way," she said.

Ms Eleonora Antillon, who worked as a press aide to Mr Arias on his 1986 presidential campaign, said the politician made sexual advances towards her.

"When I saw how lawyers and some women were doubting (Arias), I decided to support her, and I said, 'I believe her because he did something similar to me years ago'," Ms Antillon told Reuters in an interview. Her story was first reported by Costa Rican media.

Ms Marta Araya Marroni, who works in publishing, told the Tico Times that Arias grabbed her leg during a meeting in his home office in 2012 and offered her massages during subsequent phone conversations.

Ms Monica Morales, a journalist for Costa Rican magazine Perfil, wrote in the publication that Mr Arias invited her to sit on top of his leg at the end of a 2013 interview. REUTERS



British Prime Minister Theresa May speaking to the press after a meeting with European Council president Donald Tusk in Brussels on Thursday. Visiting Brussels in a last-ditch bid to extract EU concessions, Mrs May returned empty-handed after admitting that the European negotiations were “robust”, a polite diplomatic term for seriously bad-tempered exchanges. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

British PM May battles to save her Brexit deal

She will be more open to cutting deals in London than in Brussels to get draft ratified

Jonathan Eyal
Global Correspondent
In London

British Prime Minister Theresa May has failed in her attempts to renegotiate the draft treaty on her country's withdrawal from the European Union (EU), or Brexit.

Mrs May, who visited Brussels in a last-ditch bid to extract EU concessions, returned empty-handed after admitting that the European negotiations were “robust”, a polite diplomatic term for seriously bad-tempered exchanges.

Mr Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the EU Commission, was more direct and far less polite in

summarising the talks on Thursday.

The EU, he vowed after the meeting, “will not reopen the Withdrawal Agreement, which represents a carefully balanced compromise between the European Union and the UK”.

Still, the British Prime Minister may be making some headway towards getting her Brexit deal ratified by her Parliament – not by persuading her European colleagues to relent but by wearing down opponents back home.

After 18 months of secret negotia-

tions, Mrs May produced a draft Brexit treaty that merely succeeded in infuriating all British politicians. Those who wish to save as much as possible of Britain's European ties were disappointed by a deal that leaves unanswered big questions such as future trade relations; all these are to be negotiated after Britain has left the EU.

MPs who support maximum separation from Europe were equally annoyed by a clause that gives Ireland a right of veto over any future deal between Britain and the EU, unless

the Irish are satisfied about border arrangements between their territory and that of Northern Ireland, a province which belongs to the United Kingdom.

“Hardline Brexiters”, as they are called, regard this Irish provision as a recipe for keeping Britain inside the EU forever. As a result, Mrs May's proposed Brexit treaty was overwhelmingly rejected by the Parliament, and by the biggest majority ever recorded in the political history of the country.

She is seeking to save her treaty by persuading the EU to renegotiate the Ireland clause, either by specifying that this would never be used to hinder progress on trade talks, or by imposing a time limit on Ireland's ability to veto EU-UK relations.

But EU officials are convinced they should not budge. Any concession limiting Ireland's ability to influence a final deal over its borders would be perceived as a betrayal of a loyal but small EU member state, precisely the message Brussels

does not wish to encourage.

Imposing a time limit on Ireland's ability to have a say over a future deal will also render the guarantee irrelevant, since all Britain has to do is wait until Ireland's powers expire.

And it is very likely that if they get a concession over Ireland, Brexiters in London will come up with further demands.

For these reasons, all that Mr Juncker is prepared to offer is to “add a wording” to the current draft treaty, promising that future negotiations on Britain-EU relations would be “more ambitious in terms of content and speed”, as he put it.

But that is not enough to appease Mrs May's opponents in London. And the British Prime Minister is unlikely to squeeze any more from Ireland itself, which she visited yesterday.

Still, the ground is shifting in London. In a move that startled observers, Mr Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of main opposition party Labour, offered to support the Brexit deal if it includes a legal guarantee from Mrs May that British workers will not be disadvantaged after Brexit in terms of their social security and trade union rights; Britain would have replicate EU labour laws.

For Mr Corbyn, who is on the far-left of the political spectrum, this is a shrewd move. He supports Brexit, but most of his Labour MPs do not.

By focusing the discussion on workers' rights, he neatly bypasses tensions within his party and changes the political narrative by phrasing Brexit as a fight for the rights of the ordinary voter, rather than as an abstract tussle between European elites.

Mrs May knows fully well that one of Britain's chief attractions to foreign investors is its relatively flexible labour legislation, and that giving in to Mr Corbyn's demands would compromise Britain's future ability to compete with the EU. It could also restrict Britain's freedom to forge its own free trade deals with countries outside Europe.

But she is prepared to pay any price to get a Brexit deal ratified by March 29, which is Britain's last day as an EU member.

And she would be attracted to the idea of cutting deals back home, rather than in Brussels, where she is an increasingly isolated figure.

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SCIENCE

NUS dons' green pitch in Davos

Three researchers from the National University of Singapore (NUS) made their way to the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos last month where they spoke about how to deal with pressing issues of the day, particularly climate change. Here is what they said.

Scientific factors interrelated



PROFESSOR LAM KHEE POH
Dean, School of Design and Environment

Every aspect of our lives as individuals and as a society on planet earth is impacted by the physical sciences. The critical point to note is that these scientific factors are all intricately interrelated.

Take the example of the relationship between energy and environmental performance.

While the distribution of energy does vary tremendously across different locations, the way we plan our cities and design our buildings will affect the energy balance and influence the resulting thermal environmental conditions.

Poorly designed and constructed buildings can have significant impact on the energy use for heating and cooling. We must adopt a user-centric design process, apply a life-cycle approach and pay critical attention to implementation details to achieve real and sustained performance outcomes in terms of energy conservation and human comfort.

Sophisticated computational tools are now available that can model and simulate multi-scale energy and environmental performance in terms of airflow patterns and temperature distribution. We should capitalise on these powerful tools and strive for net-zero energy buildings, which are technologically achievable today.

The next frontier is to pursue the twin goals of "Well and Green" developments, which address sustainability issues and the health and well-being of the occupants of buildings. This necessitates broadening the engagement of traditional building professionals to include collaboration with medical, public-health and social-science experts in the new and challenging task ahead.

Green energy technology



PROFESSOR LIU BIN
Head, Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering

The dominant role played by fossil fuels in industrialisation has caused tremendous growth of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere, putting humanity's existence at risk. While Asia's CO₂ emission per capita is modest, its rapid growth and heavy reliance on coal and imported oil pose serious challenges to energy security and the environment.

To address this issue, NUS has built the Flagship Green Energy Programme to capture sunlight, CO₂ and water, and convert them into energy-dense chemical fuels, such as green methanol, which can be stored in barrels for transportation and distribution to end-users. The production of green alcohol fuels from sunshine can help meet our energy needs while maintaining an ecological balance that is critical to sustainability.

As green fuels are renewable, they are vital to decouple industrialisation from fossil fuel while protecting the environment. NUS has turned the CO₂ threat into a golden opportunity. With continued research and development, Singapore can be a green energy hub and a green technology centre globally.

We focus on developing scalable, affordable and practical energy solutions for Asia and the world. In the longer term, we aim to collaborate with global research institutions and industry to market these technologies worldwide.

Water-based air-conditioner



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ERNEST CHUA KIAN JON
Department of Mechanical Engineering

Present day air-conditioners, invented in 1902, face a number of challenges. They consume huge amounts of energy and cause significant environmental detriment due to the use of chemical refrigerants. And while they cool the desired location, they dissipate large amounts of heat to the environment, thereby creating undesirable heat zones.

In 2017, after three years of intensive R&D, NUS tested the first hybrid membrane water-based air-conditioner, labelled NUScool, which is capable of cooling any desired space without producing heat as a byproduct. In addition, this disruptive air-conditioner is able to harvest water from humid air for tropical countries experiencing a water shortage.

As far as cost is concerned, compared with the conventional, state-of-the-art air-conditioners, it is about 20 to 40 per cent less expensive. The operational cost is also 30 per cent less because of lower energy consumed to provide cooled and dry air.

NUScool is a disruptive technology at the heart of the water, energy and environment/sustainability nexus. It will help to lessen global warming, reduce death rates and help cities become distinctive global green cities.

Celebrating Chinese New Year and the diversity of calendars

The Chinese New Year kicked off on Tuesday as one of the most important holidays in Vietnam, South Korea, China and other Asian countries. Typically, it starts on the second new moon after the winter solstice.

On the Gregorian calendar, the civil calendar used in most countries, the Chinese New Year changes every year, as do the dates of holidays like Rosh Hashana, Diwali and Ramadan.

It can be easy to think of a calendar as a scientific given, or a reflection of the laws of the universe. In fact, as these holidays remind us, there are as many ways to track time as there are cultures and languages. Each calendar reveals something about how the people who created it relate to the world around them while also preserving rich cultural identities and memories.

Most timekeeping traditions track the movement of the sun, moon and stars. Others consider seasonal events, like the autumnal swarming of sea worms, used to orient each year in the Trobriand Islands off New Guinea, or the flowering of immortelle trees into hundreds of tiny vermilion flames, which marks the start of the dry season in Trinidad.

With any calendar, the basic question is which of the thousands, if not millions, of cycles in the world to follow, said Dr Kevin Birth, an anthropology professor at Queens College. Calendars "always come down to this cultural choice", he said, so using one system over another is ultimately a social contract, regardless of how scientifically accurate or sophisticated a calendar is.

A solar year – the time it takes earth to orbit the sun – lasts around 365 days, while a lunar year, or 12 full cycles of the moon, is roughly 354 days. Because of this discrepancy, a purely lunar calendar – like the Islamic, or Hijri, calendar – doesn't stay aligned with the seasons. Islam's holy month of Ramadan may fall in summer one year, and winter a number of years later.

To correct for seasonal drift, the Chinese, Hindu, Jewish and many other calendars are lunisolar. In these calendars, a month is still de-

fined by the moon, but an extra month is added periodically to stay close to the solar year.

A solar calendar is useful for farming, fishing and foraging societies that need to plan ahead for particular times of the year. But a purely solar calendar, like the Gregorian, tells you nothing about the phases of the moon.

The Hijri calendar requires an observation of the early crescent moon to start a new month, and thus encourages paying attention to the cosmos. The Gregorian calendar can't be tracked in the sky, which might be why many Westerners are less aware of the moon and other natural phenomena, said Professor Sacha Stern, who teaches Hebrew and Jewish studies at University College London.

Major events on the calendar shape cultural identity. When Jews around the world celebrate Sukkot, a harvest festival, they are observing the timing of the harvest in Israel, and preserving a connection throughout the diaspora, Dr Birth said.

Holidays also structure personal and historical narratives. Some secular holidays in the United States centre on legacies of war, which fits "when you think that the United States also has the largest military budget in the world", Dr Birth said.

Chinese holidays usually emphasise family union and honouring ancestors, which aligns with the importance of filial piety.

Many ancient calendars, like the Chinese and Mesoamerican ones, build in fortune-telling, with prescriptions for when to build a house, get married, have a funeral and other life events. Similar calendars provide structure and comfort to people today.

Ms Britt Hart, an astrologer based in Philadelphia, said she thinks people can be drawn to horoscope-based calendars because they're seeking a grander sense of time and order in the universe.

In the context of history, staying connected to an alternative calendar can also be a form of resisting the mainstream, or maintaining an identity outside of it. When a calen-



dar is imposed on a society, it usually has to do with politics and power. The ability "to say when the year will start, or decide that a religious festival should be celebrated at a particular time, can be quite useful for a politician", Prof Stern said.

The Gregorian calendar has been used as a global standard for only about a century, and is "very much a reflection of European commerce and colonialism", Dr Birth said. It has now been built into computer architecture, but that doesn't mean another calendar couldn't one day become dominant.

A Hijri calendar from the Gregorian year 2014 hangs in Dr Birth's office. On it, Christmas falls on 3 Rabi al-Awwal, the third day of the third month.

He loves the reminder that "holidays you think are stationary actually move, and those you think move are actually stationary". It shows "how cultural these things are, rather than natural", he said.

NYTIMES



Above: A woman lighting candles at a Buddhist temple during Chinese New Year in Beijing on Wednesday.

Left: Muslims praying in Srinagar, India, on Nov 12, on the third day of Rabi al-Awwal, the third month of the Islamic calendar.

PHOTOS: EPA-EFE, REUTERS



I do not believe this planet is condemned to having extreme climate become the norm. If we act boldly and swiftly; if we set aside our political interests in favour of the air that our young people will breathe, the food they will eat and the water they will drink; if we think about them and their hopes and dreams, then we will act and it will not be too late.

We can leave behind a world that is worthy of our children, where there is reduced conflict and greater cooperation – a world marked not by human suffering, but by human progress.

- Professor Benjamin Horton is the chair of the Asian School of the Environment at Nanyang Technological University and a principal investigator at the Earth Observatory of Singapore. He is an author of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Fifth Assessment Report and an editor of the Sixth Assessment Report.



world's water systems, including an increase in floods and droughts, causing displacement and conflict. We only have to look at the news in

Climate X factor

The evidence is clear. Rising global temperatures have been accompanied by changes in weather and climate. In addition to the US and Australia, many places have seen changes in rainfall, resulting in more floods and droughts, as well as more frequent and severe heatwaves. The planet's oceans and glaciers have also experienced some big changes – oceans are warming and becoming more acidic, ice caps are melting and sea levels are rising. As these and other changes become more pronounced in the coming decades, they will

I did not realise an example of this influence would happen less than 10 days later. Let me explain. The temperature difference between the cold Arctic and the warmer regions in the south during the winter drives the jet stream, which shapes and propels the weather systems of the Northern Hemisphere. But the temperature difference has decreased because

This year's Australian heatwave, which has seen temperatures above 40 deg C for several days straight in some areas, has mainly been due to a high-pressure system off the south-east coast that has



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The Straits Times says

Trump’s fresh opportunity to deliver

President Donald Trump’s State of the Union address seems to have passed its first test, that of public opinion. A poll by CBS News reported that 76 per cent of viewers liked what they heard in his 82-minute speech on Capitol Hill on Tuesday. The second test of its success, what it can yield politically, now looms. The federal government is on course for another shutdown next Friday unless Mr Trump and Congress mend fences. The main obstacle remains the wall. The United States President insists it is critical to stopping violent crime, drugs and human trafficking incidents associated with illegal border crossings from Mexico.

The Democrats, convinced he is trying to fulfil a populist campaign promise rather than fix what’s wrong with immigration policies, will brook no spending proposal that includes a wall. Mr Trump tried to change hearts, devoting sizeable parts of his speech to unity. He spoke of governing “not as two parties but one nation”. The eloquence may have gone to waste; another shutdown blots the horizon. Rancour could also deepen. Mr Trump sought to put the Democrats on the defensive for backing probes into allegations of his campaign’s collusion with Russia. The investigations, he argued, might trip up the buoyant economy. He also called the Democrats foetus-killing socialists, sounding unmistakably like a president who is seeking re-election. Abortion remains a wedge issue for voters, and socialism is seen as un-American. The third test will be of the foreign policies he outlined. He must deliver a world better than the one he found. Not lacking in ambition, he has seized on challenges that his predecessors tiptoed around. He stirred up disquiet for the forceful way he has waged a trade battle with China, but can still win the war if the two nations can now cross the river by feeling the stones. His talks with North Korea are going into round two. A more conventional president would not have met Mr Kim Jong Un without preconditions but Mr Trump took the chance. The Singapore Summit led to a welcome suspension of Pyongyang’s missile testing and military brinkmanship. In Vietnam, a path to North Korea’s denuclearisation and reintegration into the global fold must be sought.

Anxiety rings in two other decisions that have security implications for Asia. Mr Trump has declared his intent to draw down troops from the Middle East, where the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria group has been nearly stamped out, and from Afghanistan after 19 years of war. An exit without due diligence may create an opportunity for extremism to rebound. Mr Trump is at the helm of the world’s most powerful nation at a time of transition. Disruption – economic, political and geopolitical – has not yet yielded to order. But disagreement need not prevent deals, whether with Congress or China. Washington can choose to usher in a fresh spring.

By Invitation

Australia’s telling silence on US role in Asia

The absence of previous staunch support of American leadership reflects changed views on US-China confrontation



Hugh White
For The Straits Times

Sometimes what is left out of a major policy speech is as important as what is actually said. That was certainly true when Australian Defence Minister Christopher Pyne spoke about regional security in Singapore recently.

The theme of his keynote address was the challenge to the “rules-based order” in Asia posed by China’s growing power and influence, and by the escalating US-China contest, which he described as the “defining great-power rivalry of our time”.

Most of his speech at the International Institute for Strategic Studies forum on Jan 28 was devoted to explaining what Australia believed should be done about this. It was an interesting exposition.

In one long section, he explained in some detail Australia’s big new programme of strategic engagement with its close island neighbours in the South Pacific. In another part, he talked extensively about Australian ambitions to build even stronger linkages with Asean. A third section gave details of major new equipment investments for the Australian Defence Force.

Throughout the speech, he urged countries in the region to abide by the rules and strengthen cooperation.

But there was only a single perfunctory mention of Australia’s alliance with America, and no specific mention at all of an American leadership role in upholding the Asian regional order or managing the tensions and dangers that arise from its escalating rivalry with China.

SAME FORUM, DIFFERENT MESSAGE

We can see how significant this omission is if we compare Mr Pyne’s speech with one that Australia’s then Foreign Minister Julie Bishop delivered on the same theme to the same forum in 2017.

Ms Bishop also spoke about the rising geopolitical tensions in Asia, but her treatment could not have been more different.

“If stability and prosperity are to continue, the United States must play an even greater role as the indispensable strategic power in the Indo-Pacific,” she said. “The United States is uniquely placed to do so. It is the pre-eminent global strategic power in Asia and the world by some margin.”

What’s more, in her speech, Ms Bishop placed democratic systems and values at the heart of Australia’s approach to the contest between America and China.

“Critically, the domestic political system and values of the United States reflect the liberal rules-based order that we seek to preserve and defend,” she said. “The importance of liberal values and institutions should not be underestimated or ignored... An essential pillar of our preferred order is democratic community.”

Mr Pyne did not mention “democracy” or “values” at all when he spoke last week. Instead, he went out of his way to distance Australia from the increasingly bellicose attitudes towards China that are coming out of Washington over the past year – reflected, for example, in US Vice-President Mike Pence’s fiery speech to the Hudson Institute in October last year, widely seen as foreshadowing a “new Cold War” with Beijing.

“I do not agree with commentators who have sought to describe emerging great power competition as a new Cold War,” Mr Pyne said. “It’s a simplistic and unsophisticated characterisation of what is a much more complex and dynamic geostrategic paradigm.”

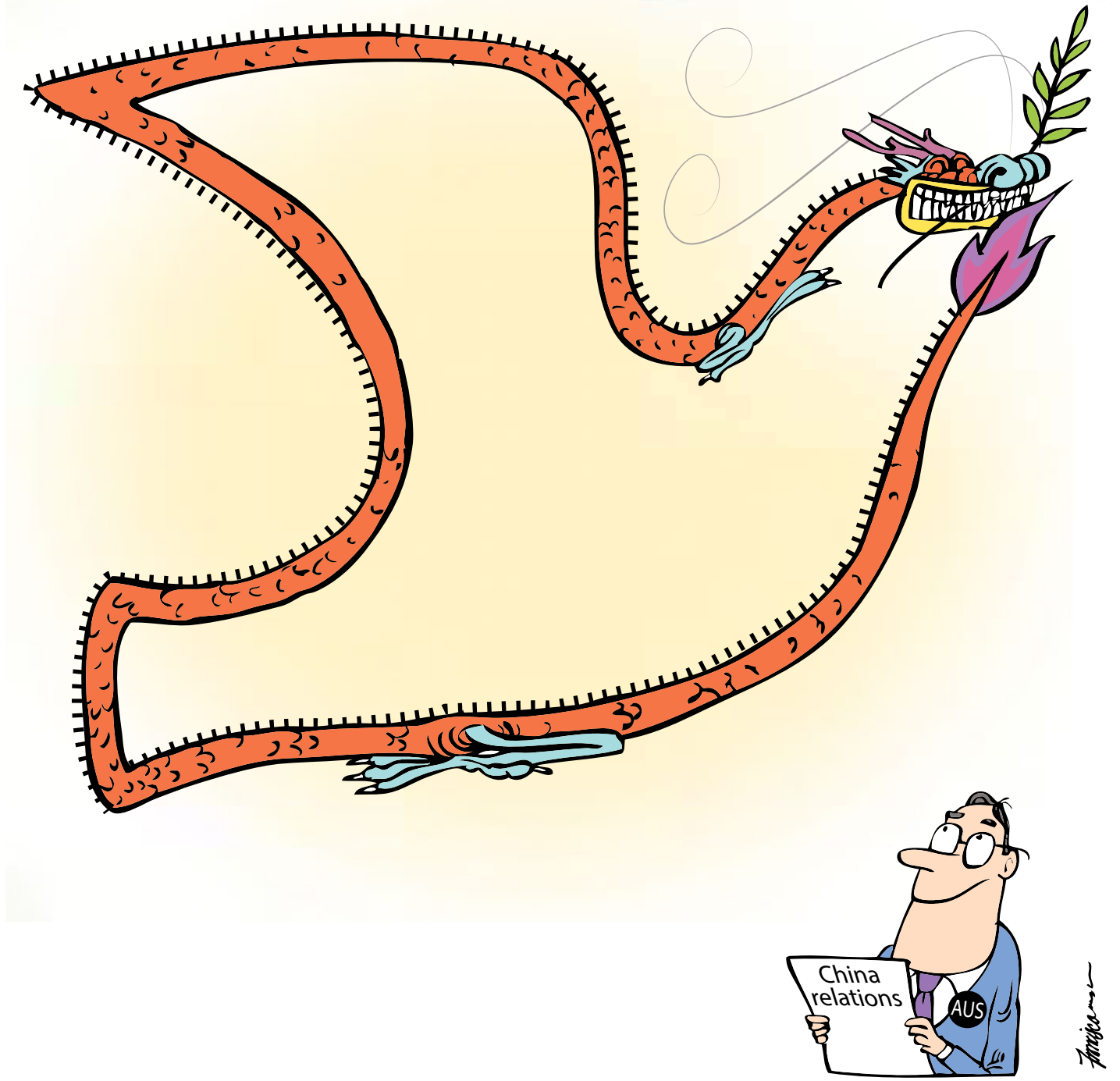
“Any division of the region into Cold War-like blocs is doomed to failure... It is critical that US-China relations do not come to be defined in wholly adversarial terms.”

And yet the division of Asia into geostrategic blocs, with the democracies led by America on one side and China on the other, seemed to be exactly what Ms Bishop was proposing just two years ago, and it is very much the way leading people in Washington are thinking today.

Mr Pyne’s speech, therefore, appears to be a very striking and clear repudiation both of Australia’s policy just two years ago and of American policy as it is emerging now.

This impression is reinforced by the fact that Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison has recently expressed similar views.

In a major foreign policy address



Nonetheless, the essential message from Mr Pyne’s speech was clear. The way to deal with China’s rise is not to confront it, as so many people in Washington increasingly demand, but to embrace and persuade it.

in November last year, he said that it was “important that US-China relations do not become defined by confrontation”, at a time when that is very much the way Washington is seeking to define them.

In his speech, Mr Pyne also went out of his way to distance Australia from the trade policies of the Trump administration. He spoke of the importance of free trade and of agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership which Washington has repudiated. And in a thinly veiled swipe at those in Washington who hope to use trade restrictions to hobble China’s economy and undermine its growing power, he said: “There is no gain in stifling China’s growth and prosperity.”

But none of this means that Mr Pyne was letting China off the hook. He was quite forthright in criticising China’s conduct.

SOUTH CHINA SEA

“The building and militarisation of artificial features in the South

China Sea, for instance, has not increased regional confidence in China’s strategic intentions,” he said. “Instead, it has increased anxiety.” He called on China to act more positively to reassure its neighbours about how it would use its growing power.

Nonetheless, the essential message from Mr Pyne’s speech was clear. The way to deal with China’s rise is not to confront it, as so many people in Washington increasingly demand, but to embrace and persuade it. “We are not interested in containing China, but we are interested in engaging and encouraging China to exercise its power in ways that increase regional trust and confidence.”

It is important to recognise the magnitude and significance of the gap that these words reveal between thinking in Washington and Canberra about how to deal with China, which everyone now agrees is the primary strategic question of our time.

Not since disputes over the bombing of North Vietnam in the early 1970s have America and Australia differed so sharply over an issue of such importance to the two countries’ positions in Asia.

It is worth asking what has driven Australia to shift so sharply from Ms Bishop’s strident advocacy of a values-driven, US-led containment of China just two years ago, and the cautious proposals for consultation and compromise now proposed by Mr Pyne.

One reason is no doubt pressure from Beijing. Ms Bishop’s speech

began a long period of tense relations in which ministerial contact was almost completely frozen and, for the past year, Canberra has been bending over backwards to try to get things back on track. Distancing itself from Washington’s policies clearly helped.

LOSS OF CONFIDENCE

But the deeper reason has more to do with Washington. The presidency of Mr Donald Trump has, of course, undermined confidence in America’s willingness and capacity to sustain an effective leadership role in Asia, but it is not just about Mr Trump.

Whoever is in the White House, it is less and less clear that America can or will prevail in a strategic contest with China, and more and more likely that any serious attempt to do so will end up in a catastrophic war rather than an easy American victory.

That being so, even Canberra’s most devoted loyalists to the US alliance must ask themselves whether simply backing America is a viable option for navigating the troubled times ahead.

And if not, what alternative is there but to start talking more seriously, both to China and to our neighbours? That is what Mr Pyne’s speech seems to recognise.

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• Hugh White is emeritus professor of strategic studies at the Australian National University in Canberra.

Singapore Govt has not gone slack

Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat rebuts a contention that recent incidents, including NS training deaths and cyber attacks, are the result of the political leadership's complacency.

Is complacency the cause of our recent spate of distressing failures – from training deaths in national service to the SingHealth cyber attack; from power failures to misplaced postal mail? Have we become so lulled by our success that we have allowed high standards to lapse?

The Zaobao editorial of Feb 1 raises serious questions that my colleagues and I will not shirk. Singaporeans do expect the best of their Government and of themselves. We will not flinch from taking a hard look at ourselves each time there is a failure, and doing whatever is necessary to put things right.

But I reject the suggestion by some that the political leadership has allowed the whole system to go slack. And worse still, that we have gone soft on ourselves and the public service, failing to hold senior people accountable when things go wrong.

STRENGTHENING OUR SYSTEM

Each generation faces its own set of challenges. Singapore experienced serious incidents in the past too.

The Hotel New World collapse, the Sentosa cable car accident and the Jurong Shipyard Spyros explosion, to mention a few, resulted in many deaths. Each time, our pioneers learnt the painful lessons, and put things right.

Thanks to these collective efforts, Singapore has achieved a high level of development. It has not been easy, but we have always strived to maintain high standards and improve upon them.

Today, we operate larger and more complex systems. While these new systems have improved our lives, they have also brought new risks. We have had to anticipate and manage them, knowing that nothing can be absolutely risk-free.

One example is cyber security. We knew that becoming a Smart Nation would expose us to serious online threats. But not adopting IT was not an option.

After the "Anonymous" attacks on government IT systems in 2013, we established the Cyber Security Agency of Singapore. Later, we implemented Internet surfing separation in public agencies, against vocal objections. These have improved our cyber security but have not eliminated all risks.

Another example is the MRT. As the train system grew old and problems started to appear, we acted to resolve them. We introduced a new signalling system on the North-South and East-West lines. We purchased new trains and are building more rail lines to increase capacity. We benchmarked ourselves against the best in the world for reliability and



PHOTO: REUTERS

service standards.

We should have started renewing the MRT system earlier. But we have learnt from this experience, and will keep on improving the system. We are not yet where we want to be. But surveys confirm that commuters have noticed the less crowded trains and more reliable service.

ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY

Failures do and will occur. And when they do, we investigate thoroughly. In serious cases, we will convene independent Committees of Inquiry (COIs) to get to the bottom of things. COI findings, however awkward, are made public, like the recent COI on the SingHealth cyber security breach.

The Prime Minister holds ministers accountable for running their ministries properly, and correcting any shortcomings uncovered. Ministers also have to account to Parliament and to the public. When lapses occur, we deal with them transparently and honestly. This is the way to restore confidence in our systems and maintain the trust of our people.

Where individuals are found culpable or wanting, we do not

hesitate to take action.

In the case of the SingHealth cyber attack, senior officers were held responsible and disciplined. Officers who had failed in their duties were punished, and some were dismissed.

Similarly, individuals involved in the leak of information on HIV-positive patients are being investigated and dealt with in court; and the SAF has disciplined senior officers and relieved them of command for training accidents.

Leaders have to take command responsibility. When something goes wrong, the leader of the organisation, be he the minister, permanent secretary or CEO, has to take responsibility and put things right. If the lapse shows that the leader has been slack, negligent or incompetent, then serious consequences must follow, including removal.

But we should not routinely dismiss officials whenever things go wrong, regardless of the facts or circumstances.

Doing so may give the appearance of solving the problem when that is not necessarily the case. It is more important to do the hard work of resolving the problem

at the root, which requires the concerted effort of everyone.

Neither should our actions deter innovation, the willingness to think out of the box and try new solutions.

Mr Ting Kheng Siong, writing in Zaobao on Feb 3, is right to caution against creating a public service culture where "Doing more means making more mistakes; doing less means making fewer mistakes; and if we do nothing we will make no mistake". That would be the most serious mistake we could make.

Singapore got here because our pioneers dared to take risks. All the ventures we are now so proud of – from Jurong Industrial Estate to Changi Airport – were once carried forward with no certainty they would succeed.

If public officers had not dared to take risks for fear of being axed if things went wrong, we would never have built an exceptional country.

CULTURE

Culture is set from the top, but it is realised daily through the actions of every individual in the organisation.

We seek to maintain the highest standards of excellence in

Singapore. Each of us must strive for quality and safety, and take pride in what we do.

While some failures expose systemic weaknesses that must be fixed, others are caused simply by lax individual attitudes towards work.

As a society, we can learn from others like the Japanese and the Swiss, who have a strong sense of personal responsibility and a meticulous attention to detail. We must strengthen such personal mindsets at all levels of society, from the heads of organisations to front-line workers, in the private sector and the Government.

Though this imposes high demands on every Singaporean, we will persist on this path. If we become complacent and slack, we are finished.

That has to be in our DNA, carried forward from generation to generation – to always strive to do better for Singaporeans and for Singapore. The political leadership is committed to this ethos.

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• Heng Swee Keat is the Finance Minister of Singapore.

PUTTING THINGS RIGHT

We will not flinch from taking a hard look at ourselves each time there is a failure, and doing whatever is necessary to put things right. But I reject the suggestion by some that the political leadership has allowed the whole system to go slack. And worse still, that we have gone soft on ourselves and the public service, failing to hold senior people accountable when things go wrong.



FINANCE MINISTER HENG SWEKEAT, noting that Singaporeans do expect the best of their Government and of themselves.

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

If the lapse shows that the leader has been slack, negligent or incompetent, then serious consequences must follow, including removal. But we should not routinely dismiss officials whenever things go wrong, regardless of the facts or circumstances. Doing so may give the appearance of solving the problem when that is not necessarily the case.



MR HENG, on leaders having to take command responsibility.

NO ROOM FOR COMPLACENCY

If we become complacent and slack, we are finished. That has to be in our DNA, carried forward from generation to generation – to always strive to do better for Singaporeans and for Singapore. The political leadership is committed to this ethos.



MR HENG, on maintaining the highest standards of excellence in Singapore.

Huawei at the centre of a global technology war

The world could split into spheres of influence in the fight over 5G supremacy between the United States and China

John Pomfret

Over the past few months, the US government has launched an assault against Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei for three publicly acknowledged reasons: Huawei, as the Justice Department alleges, was involved in sanctions-busting with Iran. The company also allegedly stole US technology and even awarded its employees bonuses to do so.

And third, because Huawei is a Chinese company and Chinese law mandates that it follow the orders of its security services, anything Huawei installs in equipment used by a US ally could pose a security risk to the United States.

But, in the three-dimensional chess game that is US-China relations, underlying this battle is another conflict with China over technology and US concerns that it is losing the fight.

This battle centres on the roll-out

of 5G telecommunications technology that is expected to reshape not only modern economies but modern warfare, too. And so far, China appears to be ahead – very far ahead.

This matters because 5G will produce enormously faster broadband speeds – upwards of 10 gigabits per second – with no lags. This web of connectivity could facilitate the introduction of highways with driverless cars, advanced automation on factory floors and a brave new world where machines effortlessly exchange oceans of data.

It could also transform warfare with integrated military operations that would make today's joint operations look like children playing in a kindergarten sandbox. Imagine squadrons of pilotless fighters, drones and smart missiles along with a coordinated cyber attack.

Tragically for the US, China's efforts to roll out its 5G network have lacked any of the catalysing drama associated with the Soviet

Union's launch of Sputnik, the world's first satellite, in 1957.

A report last year by Deloitte says China has, since 2015, outspent the US by an estimated US\$24 billion (S\$32 billion) in wireless communications infrastructure.

Density is key to 5G. A successful network needs more cell towers than 4G, meaning more small cells on telephone poles and street lamps. According to the Deloitte report, China Tower, the world's leader in building these relay stations, has invested US\$17.7 billion since 2015, beating all its US rivals combined.

Nationwide, China has 1.9 million wireless sites against 200,000 in the US. For every 10 sq miles or 26 sq km, China has 5.3 sites, while the US has a paltry 0.4. Chinese telecoms firms are on track to begin standalone 5G service in 2020, five years ahead of their US counterparts.

Faced with this disparity, the Deloitte report warns that "China and other countries may be creating a 5G tsunami, making it near impossible to catch up".

To get ahead, China has leveraged its systemic differences with the US. A few decades ago, American analysts scoffed at China's continued use of communist-era

"Five-Year Plans" to manage its economy. Not anymore.

According to Deloitte, China's most recent plan earmarks US\$400 billion for 5G-related investments, dwarfing anything similar in the US. China's government has forced its three big telecommunications providers to work together to build 5G, something the US government could not do.

China also has strong-armed the country's leading Internet platform companies – such as Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent, JD.com and ride-sharing company Didi Chuxing – into taking a nearly US\$12 billion stake in one telecoms provider, China Unicom, to subsidise its 5G roll-out.

Beijing has harnessed the full weight of its national government to ensure that Chinese firms are at the forefront of standards-setting negotiations worldwide. In a report released in November, the Eurasia Group consulting firm estimated that while China was on the sidelines of the standards setting for 3G and 4G, Chinese firms could end up holding upwards of 40 per cent of the standard essential patents for standalone 5G.

China is not the only country ahead of the US in 5G. Japan has far

more sites per 26 sq km – 15.2 – than both China or the US.

Germany has made similar progress to China's – with nearly 10 times more sites per 26 sq km than in the US.

But, despite some of President Donald Trump's claims, neither Japan nor Germany is considered a threat to the US. At root, the issue here is trust.

US moves against Huawei are driven by a fear that the Chinese Communist Party not only rejects the values of a Western liberal economic system but also is at war with those values across the globe. What's more, US officials worry that the Communist Party has conscripted Huawei in this battle, both as a weapon to dominate cutting-edge technology and as an agent that can conduct espionage on the West.

Despite Huawei's protestations that American worries about espionage are unwarranted, its executives routinely cross the line between state and private actors. Take Meng Wanzhou, Huawei's chief financial officer, who was detained in Vancouver in December and has now been charged with bank fraud in connection with Huawei's alleged sanctions-busting

in Iran. She reportedly had eight passports, one a Chinese government official passport.

Wang Weijing, the Chinese employee arrested last month in Poland on espionage charges, worked for the Chinese consulate in Gdansk before joining Huawei, again blurring the distinction between Chinese officialdom and the private sector.

Seen in this light, the American actions against Huawei mix both an independent law enforcement action and a high-stakes worldwide contest with a government whose core ideology is increasingly inimical to US values.

So, what's next? Just a few years ago, pundits heralded the victory of globalisation and the onset of a borderless world. Now, the Huawei case raises the prospect of a newly bifurcated globe, split into technological spheres of influence. The US and its closest allies – Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Britain and Japan – are coalescing into one. China leads another. In the developed world, Germany and France are sitting on the fence. In the global south, Malaysia and Indonesia are up for grabs. And Huawei is at the centre.

WASHINGTON POST

• John Pomfret, a former Washington Post bureau chief in Beijing, is the author of *The Beautiful Country And The Middle Kingdom: America And China, 1776 To The Present*.

Field notes

Rebuilding lives with quake-proof homes

But progress is slow in Indonesia due to lack of funds and little awareness of safe buildings



Arlina Arshad

Regional Correspondent

YOGYAKARTA • Indonesian housewife Kussupastiaty recalls vividly the fateful morning of May 27, 2006, when a 6.4-magnitude earthquake struck the city of Yogyakarta.

The ground wobbled violently, swallowing up houses, schools, roads and bridges. Nearly 6,000 people died and more than 36,000 were injured in the aftermath. A million people, including Ms Kussupastiaty, were left homeless.

She received 15 million rupiah (\$\$1,400) in government aid that could buy only basic materials but not cover building costs. So, Ms Kussupastiaty and her family had to live in a tent for three years while they saved up to rebuild their house, brick by brick. A small quake struck again, so “there are holes in the roof and leaks everywhere”.

She said: “My new house is a bit stronger than the old house as there are iron rods supporting the bricks. But I’m not confident that it can withstand quakes.”

“We have now built three doors so we can escape more quickly, and

we make sure the paths to the exits are clear of clutter.”

Indonesia sits on the Ring of Fire, making it one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. Yet, there appears to be little awareness about safe building design and construction practices, analysts said. A lack of funds, low-quality building materials and substandard skills have resulted in buildings that are poorly constructed.

And typically, after an earthquake, parties such as the government, donors and the local community try to rebuild houses as quickly as possible on limited funds and manpower, compromising quality.

Mr Valentinus Irawan, Indonesia’s representative at the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre – an independent, non-governmental organisation – said the Ministry of Public Works and Housing has issued earthquake-resistant building codes and standards but enforcement is lacking on the ground. He said: “Safety culture or awareness of disaster risks in Indonesia has not been internalised properly.”

QUAKE-RESISTANT HOUSES

However, some quake-resistant houses have been built over the years in Indonesia.

Traditional houses – such as Omo Hada in Nias Island, and the Gadang houses in the Minangkabau highlands of West Sumatra – generally have a good record of withstanding earthquakes as they



MATERIALISTIC CULTURE

Say I am a rich man, I want to show off my wealth by wearing a Rolex watch and branded clothes. This type of house does not reflect wealth; it looks like the house of a meatball hawker.



MS SRI REJEKI ESAKASI, who owns a Risha shophouse, on why some people shun the modest-looking Risha houses.



Shopkeeper Ngadiyem in front of her dome house – one of 80 such houses in New Ngelepen village in Sleman. They are made of concrete and reinforced with steel, which can help them withstand storms and quakes. They also look similar to the homes in the children’s TV series Teletubbies. ST PHOTOS: ARLINA ARSHAD

are built by interlocking pillars and beams instead of the use of nails.

Mr Arozanolo Gulo, who works at Nias Heritage Museum, said: “It’s hard to find large pieces of wood and skilful builders now. Also, people these days prefer modern houses and consider traditional houses to be backward and not stylish. Local wisdom cannot be passed down to younger generations.”

In Sleman, near Yogyakarta, the New Ngelepen village boasts 80 dome houses, made of concrete and reinforced with steel, which can withstand storms and quakes.

Built on 2.3ha of land by the non-profit Domes For The World Foundation – based in Utah in the United States – the project was completed in just half a year in 2007 to house 36 families displaced by the May 2006 quake. The domes look similar to the homes in the children’s TV series Teletubbies, and have become a tourist attraction.

One of its residents, shopkeeper Ngadiyem, 59, who runs a provision store, said: “I feel safe here. I don’t fear that anything will collapse during a quake. If there was a tornado or strong winds at the old house, I would run because I would have been scared.”

The Public Housing Ministry has developed quake-resistant Risha homes, short for Rumah Instan Sederhana Sehat or Simple Instant Healthy Housing. These use a Lego-style system of interlocking blocks. The three block sizes can be easily assembled and dismantled, and the houses can be built in a few

days. President Joko Widodo had instructed that Risha homes to be built for victims of last August’s quake in Lombok Island.

Mr Susilo Ardmarwoto, 66, a retired ministry official involved in Risha development, said the technology was launched 15 years ago, but “the community has yet to understand the concept and accept it”. Many people tend to believe houses made of bricks are sturdier.

MINDSET CHANGE

With growing prosperity, there is a strong trend towards construction of masonry houses as a show of status and wealth.

Ms Sri Rejeki Esakasi, 55, who owns a Risha shophouse, said there is a “culture of materialism” among Indonesia’s upper class folk, who shun modest-looking Risha houses, even if they may be safer.

She said: “Say I am a rich man, I want to show off my wealth by wearing a Rolex watch and branded clothes. This type of house does not reflect wealth; it looks like the house of a meatball hawker.”

The business management lecturer suggested that opinion leaders such as government leaders, celebrities, clerics and social media influencers spread awareness on the importance of building safe homes.

She said: “A mindset change is needed. We must make the idea of owning quake-resistant houses cool.”

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Quake-proof homes in Indonesia



SCAN TO WATCH



<http://str.sg/quakeproof>



It took three years for Ms Iswanti Suparma to erect her sustainable “earthbag house” (left) in Yogyakarta and it was done with much trial and error. The house has no corners and is hence less susceptible to seismic waves.

ST PHOTO: ARLINA ARSHAD

Cow-dung house stands strong

Two round cylindrical towers with thatched roofs stand out among ordinary brick houses in Indonesia’s historical province of Yogyakarta.

Trees and lush plants circle the home. Its interior is bathed in green and orange light thanks to glass bottles slotted into the cow-dung-plastered walls.

The sustainable “earthbag house” sitting above a fault line belongs to Ms Iswanti Suparma, a 50-year-old women’s rights activist.

“The land on which we reside is

alive and living, especially if it is around or above a fault line. We cannot fight it; we can only learn to adapt and try to get along with it,” she said.

And so she did, scouring the Internet and books for ideas on how to build a house that is not only quake-resistant, but also affordable and eco-friendly.

She chanced upon a construction technique known as the “super-adobe”, developed by Iranian architect Nader Khalili.

The design calls for sandbags to first be filled with earthen materials such as soil, lime and straw, and then be coiled and stacked with barbed wire to form a dome. The base, which is isolated by a layer of sand, creates a floating foundation that can help to absorb tremors.

As the house has no corners, it is far less susceptible to seismic waves. “So, when there’s an earthquake, the house doesn’t collapse, but only dances with the movements,” said Ms Iswanti.

She began erecting the house in 2014 and it was completed only

three years later after much trial and error, as local builders had no experience in building such houses.

“Everything had to be built from scratch. It’s all handmade and nothing comes from the factory. But there’s a lot of fun and play as everyone was using hands and legs, stomping on the bags,” she recalled.

There has been no major earthquake in Yogyakarta recently and so the house has yet to undergo a “stress test”.

But an “earthbag” orphanage in northern Kathmandu Valley in Nepal survived a 7.6-magnitude

earthquake in April 2015.

The half-metre-thick walls keep the temperature inside the house stable. And in scorching hot Yogyakarta, the house is cool enough that Ms Iswanti does not need a fan or an air-conditioner.

She tried to make her house “as organic as possible”, limiting the use of cement to the exterior walls to keep out the rain. The walls inside are plastered with cow dung.

“People always ask me, ‘Isn’t it smelly, dirty and yucky?’ But I’m not using fresh dung but dung that has aged and so there are no more

microbes,” she said.

Ms Iswanti said building strong houses in earthquake-prone countries is a “shared responsibility” between the people and the government, adding: “We can’t expect the government to solve everything or to build everyone an earthquake-friendly house – it would go bankrupt.”

“Any contribution from the government or anybody is helpful, but ultimately we are the ones living there and so it’s our responsibility.”

Arlina Arshad

US Democrats need to decide if work matters

Noah Smith

The United States has an important choice to make. Should work continue to be the fundamental marker of a person's worth? Or is that idea outdated?

A hundred years ago, when the world was struggling with the social and economic upheaval wrought by the Industrial Revolution, there was little question that human labour was of the utmost importance.

The Marxist labour theory of value held that the value of a commodity was based on the amount of work that went into making it. The Soviet Union's 1936 Constitution, quoting the New Testament, declared that "He who does not work, neither shall he eat".

Meanwhile, in his speech announcing the New Deal, US president Franklin Delano Roosevelt declared: "What do the people of America want more than

anything else? To my mind, they want two things: work, with all the moral and spiritual values that go with it; and with work, a reasonable measure of security."

The New Deal definitely placed work at the centre of its programme for economic revival. Agencies such as the Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps provided jobs to the unemployed. Social Security, perhaps the New Deal's most iconic and lasting achievement, pays out its benefits based in large part on how much income someone earned over the lifetime.

Later programmes added by Mr Roosevelt's successors – such as Medicare and the Social Security Disability system – often focused on groups of people who had credible reasons for being unable to work, such as old age or disability.

Sometimes conservatives have rolled back progressive policies, portraying them as giveaways to

those who didn't work, as president Ronald Reagan did when using the disparaging term "welfare queens".

When president Bill Clinton signed welfare reform in 1996, the central change was the requirement that recipients of government benefits at least try to get a job.

Adding work requirements to government benefits is still a strategy Republicans use to attack the social safety net.

Now, as Democrats gear up to push back on decades of increasing inequality and stagnant incomes, they face the key question of whether to once again put work at the centre of social policy, as Mr Roosevelt did.

UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE AND UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME

Some on the left have championed a radical shift in strategy – to have the government value people based not on how hard they work, but on the fact that they simply exist.

The centrepiece of the Democrats' agenda – a system of universal healthcare they call Medicare for all – would give health insurance equally to every human being, finally scrapping the employer-based system that favours people with jobs.

Meanwhile, lawyer and blogger Matt Bruenig has championed the idea of a universal basic income (UBI), which would pay people simply for being Americans (or, potentially, permanent residents).

The UBI made it into Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's proposal for a Green New Deal, a raft of measures designed to combine economic

egalitarianism with environmentalism.

But although Medicare for all has wide support, many on the left are uncomfortable with the idea of UBI.

Instead, many have turned to egalitarian proposals that once again centre on human labour as the determinant of social worth.

One of these ideas is a federal job guarantee, which is also a part of the Green New Deal.

Other Democrats have focused on ideas that affect the pretax distribution of labour income – Senator Elizabeth Warren has proposed giving workers power on corporate boards, while Senator Bernie Sanders has put forward a raft of measures designed to force companies to raise pay.

The idea of a national US\$15 (\$20.40) per hour minimum wage is popular on the left, as are policies to strengthen labour unions.

More workish centre-leftists, meanwhile, have focused on big expansions to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a programme proven effective in fighting poverty; some proponents now want to expand it to the middle class.

Big increases in the EITC, which pays higher benefits to people the more they work, have been proposed by Senator Sherrod Brown and congressman Ro Khanna; and Senator Kamala Harris' ideas are very similar.

So although the tension is still muted, there is a clear divide forming between work-based social policies and more universalist arrangements.

From an economics standpoint, both approaches have strengths

and weaknesses.

Work-based programmes like the EITC and job guarantee tend to let old, sick and disabled people fall through the cracks, unless specific provisions are made to provide for these exceptions.

Policing the boundaries of who can be expected to work can be a tricky and contentious process. Policies that give higher wages and more power to workers have similar issues.

In addition, there is a real question of whether a work-based welfare state is simply out of date.

Economists aren't sure yet, but there are some signs that technology is splitting the economy into high-value and low-value occupations.

If that is true, the rationale for making poor people work for a living might be much weaker than in Mr Roosevelt's time.

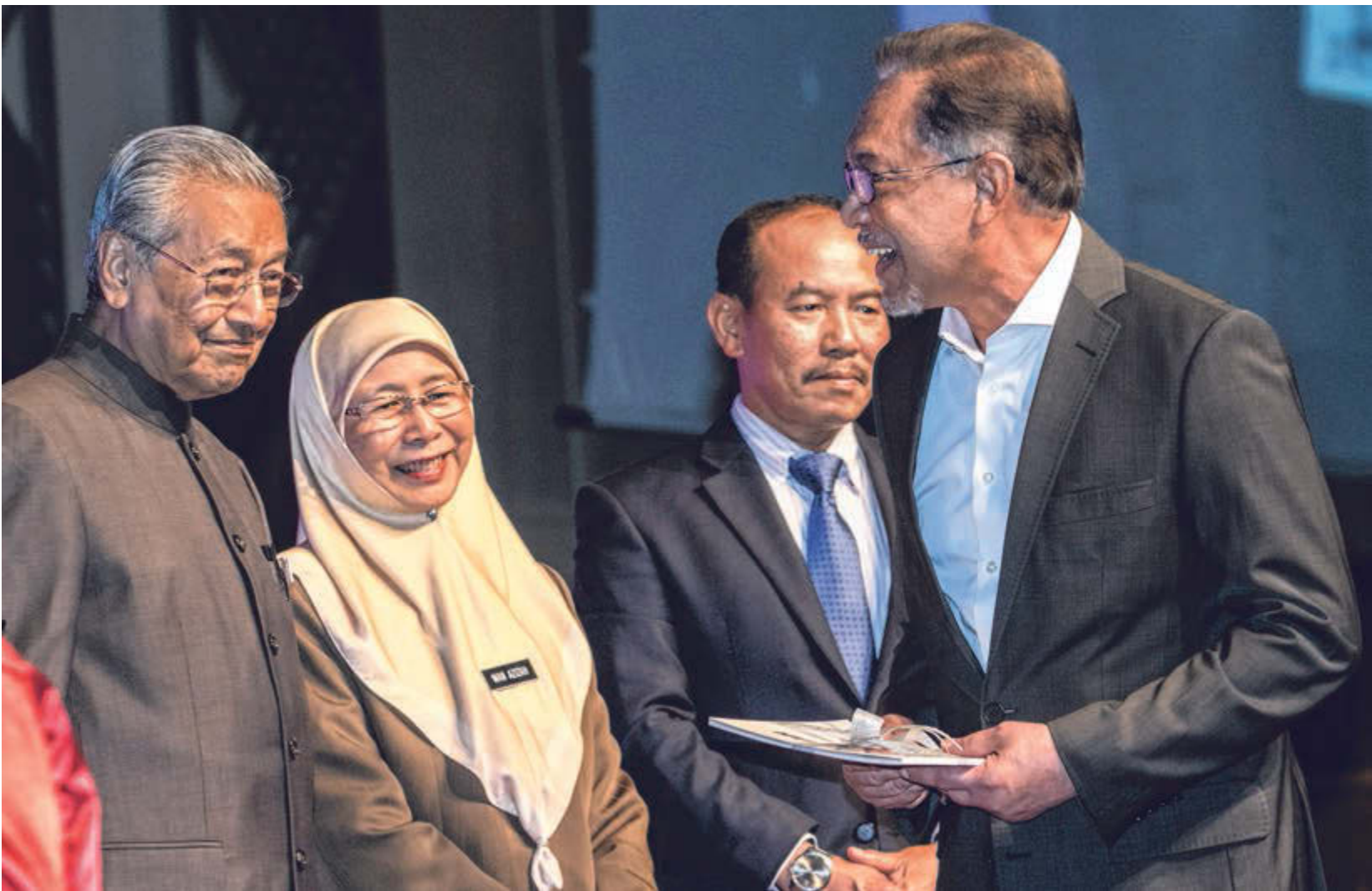
But proposals like UBI have their own drawbacks. They tend to be very expensive (healthcare might be an exception, since Medicare for all would replace the costly private health system).

They could potentially give rise to both ennui – as people lose the sense of personal value that work once conveyed – and resentment, as people find reasons to suspect that others aren't as worthy as they are.

Technology may have changed, but human nature probably has not.

The choice between work-based ideas and the alternatives won't be an easy one.

But as momentum for egalitarianism builds, sooner or later that choice will have to be confronted. BLOOMBERG



(From left) Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, Deputy Prime Minister Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, Chief Secretary Ismail Bakar and prime minister-in-waiting Anwar Ibrahim at the launch of the National Anti-Corruption Plan in Putrajaya on Jan 29. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

TheViewFromAsia

Battle corruption more effectively

Asia News Network papers commend recent efforts to tackle corruption, and call for more. Here are excerpts.

Mahathir's anti-graft plan

Editorial
Sin Chew Daily, Malaysia

Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad launched the 2019-2023 National Anti-Corruption Plan recently. The five-year plan is aimed at improving the business environment, having good and clean governance and reforming the public service system.

It is commendable for the government to show its resolution in fighting corruption. However, it remains questionable whether the objectives can be fulfilled within five years.

The culture of corruption has been deep-rooted in many government institutions. Some of the practices have been widely seen as gifts received for the convenience or assistance provided, without the realisation that such acts of gift acceptance actually constitute corruption and bribery.

The public service sector is a

high-risk area for corruption, especially with civil servants involved in decision-making and procurement.

The anti-corruption plan puts a lot of emphasis on education, and will involve drawing up strategies to make public procurement more transparent and effective.

Nevertheless, the government must also come to the realisation that streamlining the public sector and enhancing operational efficiency are equally important to restore the dented image of the country's public sector.

One thing that we cannot afford to overlook is that money politics is still very much rampant in Malaysia. It is absolutely necessary for the government to closely monitor political donations. Election expenses must be more transparent, and ruling parties must not make all kinds of promises with any development project in an election.

To ensure the success of the anti-corruption plan, the government should form a watchdog committee made up of non-governmental organisation representatives to oversee the

effective implementation of every single strategy, initiative and objective, instead of making big promises without any solid action.

Do bear in mind that Malaysians will be constantly evaluating the government's performance throughout the next five years.

Recovering stolen assets

Editorial
The Jakarta Post, Indonesia

Indonesia, perceived to be one of the most corrupt countries in the world, and Switzerland, previously known for having one of the strongest banking secrecy policies and as a safe haven for ill-gotten gains, signed early this week a mutual legal assistance agreement (MLA) on tracing and recovering stolen assets.

Yet more significant for Indonesia, which was ruled for more than 30 years by a corrupt authoritarian government until 1998, is that the agreement is retroactive. This means the MLA could also apply to corruption, money laundering, tax evasion and illegal monetary gains over the last four decades.

The government deserves high commendation for concluding the MLA. The MLA – which simplifies and accelerates procedures for tracing stolen assets, particularly by reducing formal requirements – is truly a strategic partnership between a developed country and a developing country.

The MLA will imbue the government with the authority to pursue unlawful money gained primarily through corruption, money laundering, tax evasion and

other financial crimes. This does not, however, mean that the government can immediately ask the Swiss authorities for information on the financial assets of Indonesian citizens at Swiss financial institutions.

The first – and perhaps the biggest – challenge for the government is for the MLA to be ratified by the House of Representatives, which is perceived as one of the most corrupt institutions in the country.

Given the presidential and legislative elections in April, we do not believe the House members, 80 per cent of whom are seeking re-election, will have the time to deliberate the MLA before its new lawmakers are installed in October.

The second challenge is that only corruption, money laundering and tax evasion cases that have been tried and handed final and binding court rulings are eligible under the MLA.

Since such cases involve very complex transactions that may require more than two years to prosecute from the district court up to the Supreme Court, Indonesia may need technical assistance from the Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative (StAR) to build the institutional capacity of its legal institutions.

StAR is a programme that the World Bank and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime launched in 2007 to help developing countries recover assets stolen by corrupt leaders and officials.

Despite the challenges, the MLA is nevertheless a big boost in the drive against corruption.

• The View From Asia is a compilation of articles from The Straits Times' media partner Asia News Network, a grouping of 23 news organisations.

Who wants to be a billionaire?

Tyler Cowen

I have found that when somebody or something is remorselessly mocked in my Twitter feed, there is usually something to be said in their defence. Which brings me to the controversy over presidential candidate Howard Schultz and the word "billionaire".

Before I turn to the former chief executive of Starbucks and his supposed gaffe, here are some perspectives of my own. My parents taught me never to ask a person how much he or she earns. I was told that it was rude, and I still believe that.

It follows that we also should not ask people about their net wealth. And, out of politeness, perhaps it is also inappropriate to openly discuss the range of their net wealth.

About half of all Americans have a net wealth of zero, but I would not feel comfortable calling any specific person a "zero net wealth". It is not just the inelegance of the term; it's that I would feel I was objectifying the person.

I would hesitate, for example, before referring to someone publicly as "in the US\$150,000 range of net wealth". If I were a real-estate broker, I might talk about a customer this way, but it would be in a private context with another broker. Even then, calling someone "my US\$350,000 customer" or some such isn't something that would endear me to Miss Manners.

You might feel it is different when a person's net wealth is very high, such as when the word billionaire is deployed. But that distinction does not sit easy with me. If we use the word billionaire for this reason, then aren't we also sending a negative message about the non-billionaires?

At any rate, the people mocking Mr Schultz the most do not seem to be trying to give the word billionaire positive connotations.

You might also think the word billionaire is different because today's billionaires exercise so much political power. But while it is perfectly fine to observe that billionaires have too much political power, it does not necessarily follow that it is OK to casually describe individuals by their net wealth.

Linguistic objectification is often a first step towards making others seem less human or less deserving of respect. Even if you think billionaires should pay more in taxes, or should otherwise have restricted privileges, that is a dangerous way to get there.

To be sure, the news media is in a rather different position. In a story about Richard Branson buying a private island in the Caribbean, it is natural to describe him as "the billionaire



Former Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz notes that the moniker "billionaire" has become a "catchphrase".

entrepreneur", to set the context for readers. And Mr Branson, as a public figure, cannot expect complete privacy in this regard.

Still, even in an age of social media, I see a legitimate distinction between how the press reports information to the public and how individuals speak on their own behalf – and that again militates in favour of some indirectness.

Unfortunately, there are not many useful alternatives to the word billionaire. I did an Internet search, and the ostensible synonyms include "richling", "moneybags", "tycoon" and "plutocrat", hardly improvements – and there are worse terms yet.

Mr Schultz used the phrase "people of means", which is broader, perhaps appropriately (if you think billionaires are a problem, perhaps you also worry about those worth US\$900 million). But it sounds so stilted and artificial that it just might end up drawing more attention to...billionaires.

Now to turn to what Mr Schultz actually said. How it has been described on the Internet – "Howard Schultz says billionaires should be referred to as 'people of means' or 'people of wealth'", says one tweet, while a headline reads, "Howard Schultz Prefers You Use Another Term Besides 'Billionaire'" – is not a good description of what happened.

In an interview, Mr Schultz was asked whether billionaires have too much power. He responded by noting that the moniker "billionaire" has become a "catchphrase" and proceeded to reframe the question: "I would rephrase that and I would say that people of means have been able to leverage their wealth and their interest in ways that are unfair."

So he didn't necessarily disagree with the premise of the question. Nor did he say that other people shouldn't use the term "billionaires".

For the record, he also noted that such people have "unbelievable influence", and that speaks to the problem of inequality. And he included corporations (not just people) and the political ideologies of the two major parties as part of the problem.

Is that such a terrible answer? Not only on the merits, but also in explaining why Mr Schultz might want to move away from the term "billionaire" as the sole locus of blame?

Then again, maybe that's just what you would expect a billionaire to say. BLOOMBERG

BIG PICTURE



WEATHER

Windy, with passing showers in the afternoon.
High 34 deg C **Low** 24 deg C
24-hr PSI as of 5pm yesterday: 26 to 66 (Moderate)



PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Passage of winter in Kashmir

This Kashmiri boatman braved the freezing cold and snowfall at Dal Lake in Srinagar on Thursday.

The weather improved in Jammu and Kashmir yesterday after the state received its heaviest snowfall so far this season.

The Meteorological Office has

predicted that the weather will further improve by today.

“The western disturbance that caused rain and heavy snowfall is moving out. Weather has already improved, and we are expecting further improvement during the next 24 hours,” a Met official said.

Heavy snowfall in the Kashmir Valley over 24 hours triggered avalanches and landslides at various places. In the higher reaches, there was about 2m of snow accumulation, while in the plains, there was 30cm to 60cm of snow accumulation from Thursday.

The heavy snowfall closed the Jammu-Srinagar national highway and cut off Kashmir's road links with the rest of India.

People have been asked to be careful of snow mounds sliding down roofs. Srinagar city recorded a temperature of minus 1 deg C.

ST+ news with benefits

Rewards for ST+ subscribers

Win first-row seats for magical Disney On Ice

Subscribers of The Straits Times have a chance to watch one of the most magical ice shows for free.

Disney On Ice has enchanted many, and it will be skating into Singapore from March 20 to 24 for a special show commemorating Mickey Mouse's 90th anniversary.

Called Disney on Ice presents Mickey's Super Celebration, it will feature some of the well-loved characters from the Disney movies, such as Aladdin, Toy Story and Frozen.

One lucky subscriber will get a set of four Magical Moment Packages. This includes seats in the first row, priority entrance access, an early merchandise shopping opportunity,

VIP lanyards and posters, and a post-show meet-and-greet session with the stars of the show.

Two subscribers will win four VVIP tickets to the opening show, and there will be a kids' ride during a segment of the show. One kid from each family will be eligible for the kids' ride.

Three other subscribers stand a chance to win four VVIP tickets to the opening show too.

To enter the draw, simply follow these steps:

- ♦ Look for the Rewards section in the SPH Rewards App
- ♦ Click “Join” to participate
- ♦ Terms and conditions apply.



The special show will feature well-loved characters from the Disney movies waltzing on ice, including Jasmine (left) from Aladdin, and it will also be commemorating the 90th anniversary of Mickey Mouse (right). PHOTOS: DISNEY



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The Straits Times Loyalty Programme allows readers to enjoy a whole range of dining, shopping and leisure perks by just subscribing to The Straits Times. There are also lucky draw prizes to be won and discounts on exciting events.

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Celebrate food, wine at Asian Masters

Asian Masters returns for its seventh edition from March 1.

This year-long celebration of good food and wine will have four major events: The Straits Times and Lianhe Zaobao Best Asian Restaurant Awards, Gastronomic Treasures, Feast Asia and Mixology Asia.

Participating restaurants include one-Michelin-starred restaurants The Song of India and Summer Pavilion, and other acclaimed restaurants such as Hashida Sushi and Violet Oon Singapore. Private chefs will also get the spotlight, such as celebrity make-up artist Tinoq; and Aziza Ali, who pioneered Malay fine-dining in Singapore.

Citibank card members get a 20 per cent discount off all Asian Masters events and Mixology Asia cocktail promotions.



They will also get 15 per cent off a la carte food bills at all Feast Asia participating restaurants.

Reservations for Asian Masters events can be made via www.asianmasters.com.sg or 6319-4038.

As part of the launch of the festivities, readers of The Straits Times

will get a chance to meet revered ST food critic Wong Ah Yoke on March 2, as he hosts a cooking demonstration by chef Selamat Susanto from Fat Chap restaurant.

Chef Selamat will be teaching participants two dishes: oven-baked barramundi and the dessert

Klapertart. The demonstration will be held at ToTT @ Century Square at 10am.

There are 30 pairs of tickets to be won.

How to win the giveaway:

- ♦ Download the SPH Rewards app.



Straits Times readers stand a chance to meet ST food critic Wong Ah Yoke (above) as he hosts a cooking demonstration by chef Selamat Susanto from Fat Chap (left). PHOTOS: WONG AH YOKE, 1855 F&B

- ♦ Look out for the giveaway in the Rewards section.
- ♦ Press the “JOIN” button and answer this question: This cooking demonstration by chef Selamat and hosted by ST food critic Wong Ah Yoke is part of the Asian Masters 2019 programme. Yes or No?



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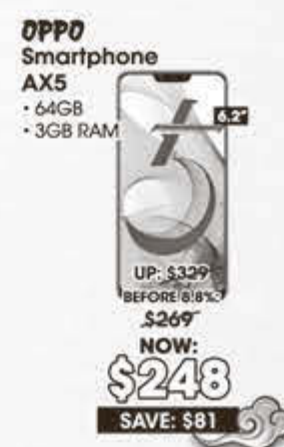


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B|

HOME

18%

PERCENTAGE OF ZONE 2 CONSUMERS WHO SWITCHED ENERGY RETAILERS IN OPEN ELECTRICITY MARKET ROLL-OUT B2

40% fall in registration of parallel-imported cars

Industry blames new emissions rules for last year's plunge, expects better sales this year

Christopher Tan
Senior Transport Correspondent

Parallel-imported cars continued to lose their shine last year, with registrations plummeting by nearly 40 per cent to 11,357.

Figures from the Land Transport Authority show their share of new car sales shrank to 14.1 per cent in 2018, down from 20.3 per cent in 2017, and around 24 per cent in 2016.

Parallel importers source cars from overseas dealers instead of directly from car manufacturers. They typically offer models which are either not available from authorised agents, or at lower prices.

The industry blames new emission regulations for the plunge, but expects a strong pick-up this year with more models meeting the standards required by the National Environment Agency (NEA).

Mr Neo Nam Heng, adviser to the Automotive Importers and Exporters Association, said the Vehicular Emissions Scheme (VES) – which accords tax rebates or surcharges on cars based on their

tailpipe emissions – had an adverse impact on parallel import sales.

As these importers do not get their vehicles from car manufacturers, they do not always have access to the relevant emission test results required by NEA. Most have had to test their cars locally, at Vicom.

“Many of them had to test their cars five or six times to get favourable results,” Mr Neo said.

He added that the new Worldwide Harmonised Light Vehicle Test Procedure (WLTP) standards adopted by Europe was another factor dampening sales of parallel imports. From late last year, several European parallel imports were available only with WLTP results. Authorised agents of European cars continued to bring in vehicles with the New European Driving Cycle (NEDC) standard.

While the NEDC standard was already accepted by NEA, the agency started accepting WLTP results as well only from Jan 1 this year.

As a result, parallel importers found it more difficult last year to get their cars approved for sale here. Furthermore, as the WLTP is a more stringent standard, models brought in with these readings of-



Last year, 44 per cent of new Honda cars sold in Singapore were parallel imports, followed by 22.6 per cent of Toyota cars, and 18 per cent of Mercedes-Benz cars. Excluding parallel imports, Toyota was the bestselling brand last year, with 10,695 cars delivered by authorised agent Borneo Motors. ST PHOTO: JASMINE CHOONG

ten fare worse in VES bandings.

For instance, a car could have had a VES rebate of \$10,000 under NEDC, but loses it when it is tested under WLTP – a standard which is supposedly more reflective of real-world driving conditions.

However, Mr Neo expects the parallel import market to rebound

Parallels on the skid: Top 3 brands and how they fared

	2018 registrations	2017 registrations	% change
Honda	6,572	8,849	▼ 25.7
Toyota	3,122	7,475	▼ 58.2
Mercedes-Benz	1,280	1,743	▼ 26.6
All brands	11,357	18,634	▼ 39.1

Source: LAND TRANSPORT AUTHORITY STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

NEW IMPETUS

There are a lot of new models, such as the new Toyota Corolla, Honda Shuttle and Honda Vezel. The popular Honda Fit will also make a comeback. It now has a VES rebate of \$10,000 – from a surcharge of \$20,000 previously.



MR NEO NAM HENG, adviser to the Automotive Importers and Exporters Association. He expects the parallel import market to rebound strongly this year.

2017 were 55.3 per cent for Honda, 39.1 per cent for Toyota and 21.9 per cent for Mercedes-Benz.

Excluding parallel imports, Toyota was the bestselling brand last year, with 10,695 cars delivered by authorised agent Borneo Motors. Kah Motor sold 8,468 Hondas; and Cycle & Carriage delivered 5,842 Mercedes-Benz cars.

Without parallel imports, Mercedes' lead over arch rival BMW was also narrower, at 10.3 per cent, versus 24.1 per cent if parallel importers were included.

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A large, multi-story apartment building at night, illuminated from within, showing many lit windows and balconies. The building has a modern design with a grid-like facade and a prominent vertical structure on the left side.

18% of consumers in Zone 2 switch to electricity retailer

Higher early switch rates seen in Zone 2 estates than Zone 1 and Jurong soft launch, says EMA

Cheryl Teh

Nearly one in five consumers eligible to switch to an electricity retailer from Jan 1 has chosen to do so, said the Energy Market Authority (EMA).

A total of 18 per cent of consumers in Zone 2 estates such as Bishan, Sengkang and Punggol have chosen to buy electricity from a retailer instead of remaining with SP Group, in the zone-by-zone roll-out of the Open Electricity Market.

Consumers in Zone 1, who are mainly in the north-west of Singapore, have been allowed to switch to a retailer since November last year, while those in Jurong had the option since April 2018. Consumers in Zone 2 had the option from Jan 1.

"Based on the switch rates in the first month of each zone, Zone 2 has seen higher early switch rates than Zone 1 and the soft launch in Jurong," said EMA yesterday.

EMA said the nationwide launch of the open market is progressing well, adding that more than 700,000 consumers in Zones 1 and 2 can now choose from more electricity retailers and enjoy competitive pricing and innovative offers.

As of end-January, about 40 per cent of consumers in Jurong and 25 per cent of households in Zone 1 had switched to a retailer. The authority said these switch rates are higher than the single-digit first-year switch rates seen in other countries such as Japan, Britain, Australia and New Zealand.

Consumers residing in Zone 3 – mostly in eastern Singapore, with postal codes starting with the numbers 34 to 52, and 81 – will have the option to switch from March 1. The whole of Singapore will be covered by May 1.

"The Open Electricity Market is about giving consumers choice. While some consumers have chosen to switch, others have decided to continue buying from SP Group," said Mr Ngiam Shih Chun, chief executive of EMA.

"Some are also taking a wait-and-see approach as there is no deadline to switching," he added.

Consumers who have made the switch have enjoyed significant savings. They pay an electricity rate about 20 per cent to 30 per cent lower than the regulated tariff, said EMA.

As of Feb 4, EMA's 13 approved retailers offer rates from 17.66 cents per kWh to 23.01 cents per kWh for their fixed price plans, and discounts from 14.5 per cent to 25 per cent for plans offering a discount off the regulated tariff.

The take-up rate for the fixed price plan is about six times more than the discount off the regulated tariff plan, an EMA spokesman said.

Surveys commissioned by EMA showed that 96 per cent of residents in Jurong and Zones 1 and 2 have heard about the Open Electricity Market initiative, with three in four residents taking some action, including seeking information online and discussing it with friends and families.

Half of the residents surveyed indicated that they are open to switching to a retailer.

The majority of these retailers have gone digital and consumers are able to sign up for services online, EMA said.

The survey findings also showed that while consumers hope to see lower electricity bills, they want more flexible pricing plans that cater to their needs as well.

These include deals with third parties such as banks, telecommunications and home insurance companies, which offer value-added services and products.

tienli@sph.com.sg

40%

Percentage of consumers in Jurong who had switched to a retailer as of end-January, compared with 25 per cent of Zone 1 households, that are mainly in the north-west.

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*Housing grants of up to \$80,000 available, eligibility conditions apply. If total grants exceed 95% of the flat price, buyers are required to pay at least 5% of the flat price using their CPF and/ or cash savings.



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New challenges for mailman with e-commerce

Postmen have heavier loads and more doorstep deliveries with spike in e-commerce items

Tiffany Fumiko Tay
and Jev Akshay Jeevan

The rise in e-commerce has led to more doorstep deliveries and heavier loads for postmen, as well as a new set of challenges for the entire postal delivery network.

SingPost, responding yesterday to queries from The Straits Times, said between November last year and January this year – a peak period for its services – postmen had to make about 50 to 60 doorstep deliveries on average a day, up from 20 to 40 a day during non-peak periods.

On average, a full-time postman delivers about 3,000 items a day, including letters, advertising mail and items that require doorstep deliveries.

The postal service provider was fined \$100,000 on Thursday for failing to meet government service standards for domestic mail in 2017.

SingPost has vowed to lighten its postmen's workload, among other immediate measures, to improve service quality over the next three to six months.

It also promised to address customers' grouses following a string of delivery issues.

Recent incidents include the arrest of a postman for mail that was found discarded.

While the amount of mail processed by SingPost has remained fairly stable over the last five years at three million items a day, it said it has "seen a significant increase in volumes of e-commerce items".

This increase has offset the decline in traditional mail, which comprises letters and publications such as magazines and annual reports.

Revenue from e-commerce now makes up about half of group revenue, which includes domestic mail, overseas operations and ware-



On average, a full-time postman delivers about 3,000 items a day, including letters, advertising mail and items that require doorstep deliveries. Revenue from e-commerce now makes up about half of group revenue, which includes domestic mail, overseas operations and warehousing and logistics units. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

housing and logistics units.

In an effort to lighten the load, SingPost will cut the amount of advertisement mail that postmen have to deliver. This will allow them more time to focus on mail delivery, it said.

Other short-term measures include hiring an additional 100 postmen, and extending mail delivery slots to weekday evenings and Saturdays.

SingPost said its existing policy allows for the adjustment of the beat size of postmen who are consistently unable to cope with their

The postal workers, who have been with SingPost for between one and 12 years, said the only difficulty they face is the larger volume of mail that tends to arrive between October and January, when they sometimes have to work extra hours to complete the deliveries.

workload to a more manageable capacity. SingPost employs about 1,000 postmen, made up of full-timers, as well as Employee Neighbourhood Postmen, who enjoy flexible working hours. Such employees make up about 35 per cent of the force, and include many housewives and retirees.

Of the 15 postmen The Straits Times approached yesterday, four agreed to speak but only on the condition that they remained anonymous. The four said they find the workload generally manageable and are able to deliver their mail on

time. The postal workers, who have been with SingPost for between one and 12 years, said the only difficulty they face is the larger volume of mail that tends to arrive between October and January, when they sometimes have to work extra hours to complete the deliveries.

None of them was aware of the new measures announced by SingPost on Thursday and could not comment on them.

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Children Act may be extended to cover those aged 16 up to 18

MSF proposes changes to support more young offenders as well as those who have been abused or neglected

Rahimah Rashith

A law which aims to support children exposed to abuse, neglect or risk could be extended to cover young offenders from the age of 16 until they turn 18.

The Children and Young Persons Act was first enacted in 1949, and last amended in 2011, to provide for the welfare, care, protection and rehabilitation of children under 16.

It supports children who have committed offences, those who have been abused or neglected by their parents or caregivers, and those whose parents are seeking the court's guidance to improve their behaviour.

Currently, offenders aged 16 to below 18 are treated as adults before the courts.

However, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) an-

nounced a proposal yesterday to extend the Act to cover this group of offenders.

MSF said in a statement that the amendment would allow young offenders, who may lack the cognitive maturity of adults, to benefit from more age-appropriate and rehabilitation-focused options provided by the community and residential facilities.

The move would also protect the identity and privacy of the young offenders to better facilitate their reintegration into society.

It added: "At the same time, while the young offender's rehabilitation is an important goal, public safety is also important. Hence, the Children and Young Persons Act today provides different sentencing options, where appropriate, for young offenders who commit grave offences such as murder."

The recommendation is part of a

series of proposed amendments to the Children and Young Persons Act put forward by the MSF for the public to give feedback.

The proposal to raise the age limit to below 18 will cover not only offenders but also those who are in need of care or protection. For example, those who are abused or neglected by their parents or caregivers will be covered too.

The ministry said: "We recognise that these older youths may not have the physical ability or maturity to remove themselves from harm's way. This proposal allows MSF and our community partners to intervene and protect these older youths."

Other recommendations include enabling the court to grant a Long-Term Care Order for a child who, in spite of best efforts by professionals and the community, cannot be reunited with the family.

The order authorises a designated person, who is not the child's natural parent or guardian, to make decisions on the child's behalf – such as those relating to their devel-

ENGAGING YOUTH

There is evidence to show that with today's complexities and problems, young people need a lot of help, even at 18. Engaging them and developing their life skills through programmes at this age is crucial.



MR ALFRED TAN, chief executive of the Singapore Children's Society.

opment, welfare, medical treatment and participation in school activities.

MSF said it consulted various voluntary welfare organisations and relevant agencies in the children and youth services sector before drawing up the recommendations.

The discussion to raise the age in the Children and Young Persons Act to below 18 years old was brought up several times in Parliament by Aljunied GRC MP Sylvia Lim last year.

Experts welcome the proposed recommendations.

Lawyer Amolat Singh said: "Rehabilitation is still the primary objective for these (young offenders). In the twilight ages between 16 and 18, the youths may have done something in a moment of folly."

"The proposed amendments show that society is more forgiving and willing to throw a lifeline to those in need."

Mr Alfred Tan, chief executive of the Singapore Children's Society, said: "There is evidence to show that with today's complexities and problems, young people need a lot of help, even at 18. Engaging them and developing their life skills through programmes at this age is crucial."

Details of the proposed amendments are available on <https://www.reach.gov.sg/>

The public can send their views via e-mail to consultations@msf.gov.sg by March 21.

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Big-car COE hits 8-month high

Premiums for certificates of entitlement (COEs) finished mostly higher in the latest tender yesterday, despite the Chinese New Year break, with bidders competing for a smaller supply of certificates.

The only exception was in the category for cars up to 1,600cc and 130bhp, which ended 1.8 per cent lower at \$25,689.

The premium for cars above 1,600cc or 130bhp finished 1.5 per cent higher to hit an eight-month high of \$34,509.

Likewise, the Open category – which can be used for any vehicle type except motorcycles but which ends up used mostly for bigger cars – rose by 4.8 per cent to close at an eight-month high of \$35,310.

Mr Samuel Yong, marketing director for Toyota and Lexus distributor Borneo Motors, said the results reflected the stronger bidding power of big-car buyers.

Mr Nicholas Wong, general manager of Honda agent Kah Motor, concurred, saying "this segment is more recession proof".

But Mr Wong also noted that the

	Cars up to 1,600cc and 130bhp	Cars above 1,600cc or 130bhp	Commercial vehicles	Motorcycles	Open
Yesterday's tender	\$25,689	\$34,509	\$26,378	\$3,709	\$35,310
Jan 23 tender	\$26,170	\$33,989	\$26,230	\$2,889	\$33,689

Source: LAND TRANSPORT AUTHORITY STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

latest results may have been driven by "panic buying" and "hoarding".

COE supply for the February-April quota period is around 10 per cent smaller than the previous three-month period.

"This might have spooked the market," he added.

But he reckoned that buyers may not accept the higher prices. If so, premiums should ease in the coming tenders.

Meanwhile, the commercial vehicle COE crept up by 0.6 per cent to end at \$26,378.

But motorcycle premium shot up by 28.4 per cent to close at \$3,709.

Mr Wong, who also oversees motorbike sales at Kah Motor's sister company Boon Siew, said the 20 per cent price drop in the previous tender had triggered strong buying in this round.

Combined with a sharp shrinkage in supply this month, two-wheeler COE shot back up.

Christopher Tan



Thousands of people young and old have been flocking to the week-long celebration at River Hongbao which will end tomorrow. Besides a giant God of Fortune, highlights included lion and dragon dances. ST PHOTOS: DESMOND FOO

A woman posing for photos in front of some giant lanterns depicting samsui women at the River Hongbao.



SPARKING JOY BY THE RIVER

Cheryl Teh

Thousands have come every night to enjoy a glittering sea of lanterns at the River Hongbao that usher in the Chinese New Year, and snag selfies with illuminated forms such as a giant God of Fortune and zodiac animals.

Other lanterns on display in this yearly event include larger-than-life recreations of samsui women, as well as new features like a wishing well in the shape of Suntec City's Fountain of Wealth.

People young and old have been flocking to the week-long celebration which will end tomorrow.

The festival is free for members

of the public, and has been an integral part of the local Chinese New Year celebration.

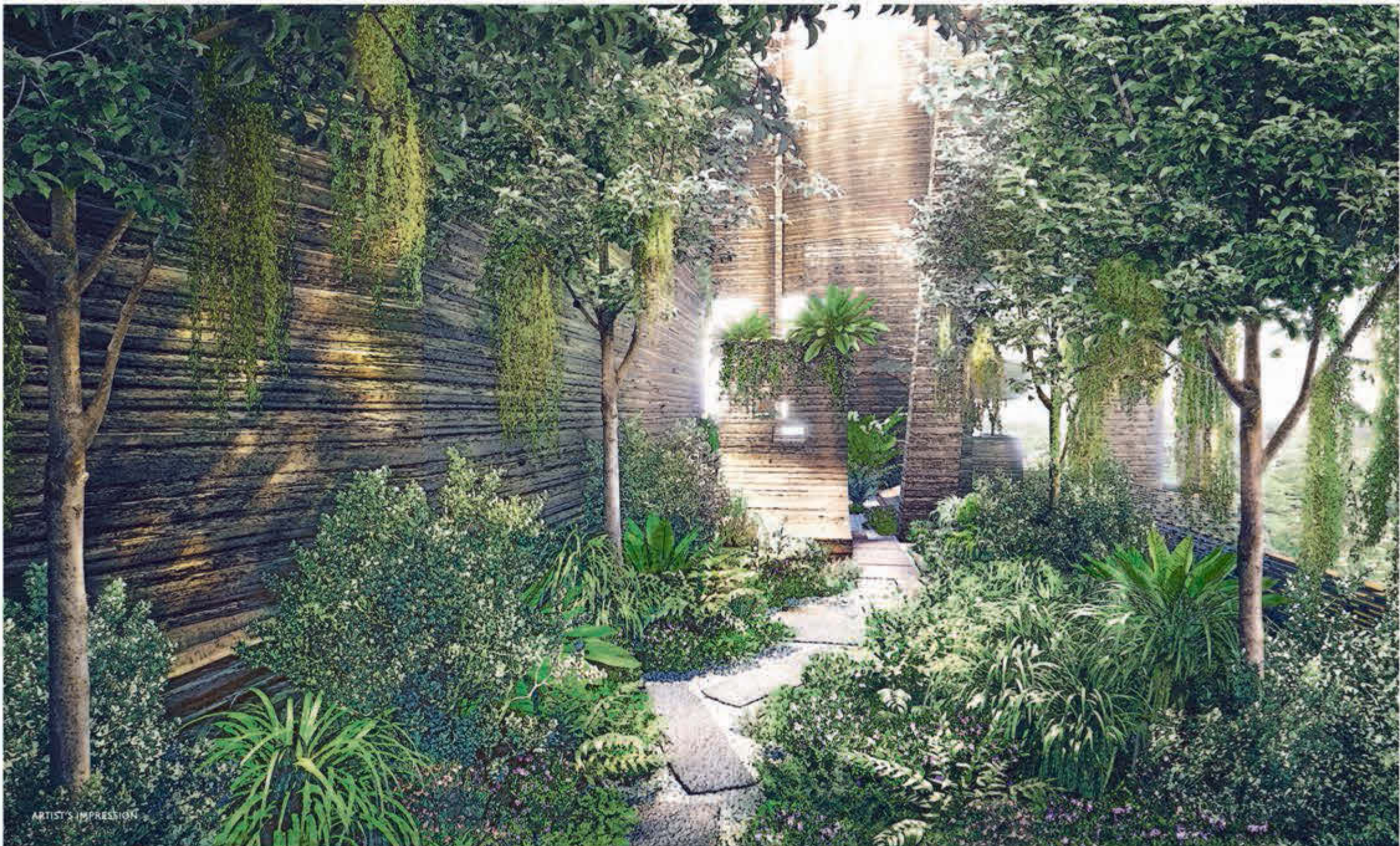
The events for yesterday and today have been themed Singapore Talent Night.

They feature appearances by local celebrities, and performances like lion and dragon dances from the Singapore Wushu Dragon and Lion Dance Federation, pupils from the Sengkang Primary School, MICapella and the Red Moon Dance Troupe.

Attending tonight's event will be Mr Ong Ye Kung, Minister for Education, and adviser to River Hongbao, and Ms Sim Ann, Senior Minister of State for Communications and Information, and Culture, Community and Youth.

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The air around Tampines Central Park was visibly hazy yesterday, with buildings in the distance appearing obscured at around 8.30am. The National Environment Agency says it is closely monitoring the air quality and will provide updates of any further findings or significant change to the air quality situation. ST PHOTOS: LIM YAOHUI

Reports of burning smell in parts of east S’pore

NEA says no local sources of burning or transboundary haze detected in the region

Tee Zhuo

A strong burning smell was reported over several parts of eastern Singapore yesterday, including Tampines, Bedok and Pasir Ris. In response to queries from The Straits Times, the National Environment Agency (NEA) said it had received reports of a smoky smell in the eastern part of the island. Its investigations so far have not detected any local sources of burning or incidents at factories that could have contributed to the smell, said its spokesman, adding that no sources of transboundary haze were detected in the region. “We are closely monitoring the air quality and will provide updates of any further findings or significant change to the air quality situation,” he said. Tampines resident Jon Lee, 45, likened the smell to that during the haze or of offerings being burned during the Chinese seventh month. “I was taking my son to school... at around 6am, and there was a

strong burning smell. At 7am, when I dropped my son off in the East Coast area, it was still there,” said Mr Lee, who works in sales. He added that there was no burning smell when he reached his workplace in the west, and that his colleague, who lives in Bedok, also described a similar burning smell. A reader, who wished to be known only as Ms Tan, 24, said she noticed the smell at the void deck of her Tampines home after 7am. “The smell was pretty strong, and when I got to the bus stop I could see that it was a bit hazy. Things looked blurry from a distance,” said the trainee teacher. Another reader who did not wish to be named also noted a strong burning smell which, she said, was similar to the haze. “I smelt it once I woke up around 7.30am and stepped out of my room. I went to the balcony to see if someone was burning something, but I didn’t really see anything,” said the 23-year-old, who works in public relations. Netizens posting on online fo-

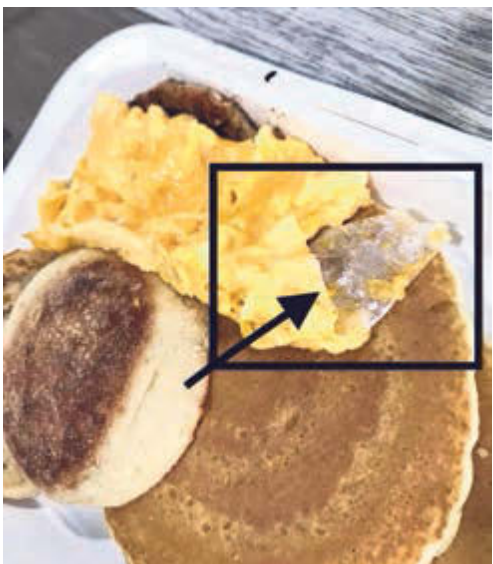
rum Reddit said Simei, Pasir Ris, Bedok, Tampines and Marine Parade were among the areas affected, with some noticing the smell from as early as 3am. Facebook user Han Han, in a post at about 7.25am, said it had a “burnt leaves” smell. When The Straits Times reached Tampines at about 8.30am, a strong burning smell was in the air. Some pedestrians were spotted donning face masks at Tampines Central Park. It was hazy in the area, with buildings in the distance appearing unclear and obscured. At least one ST reader said the smell reached the Bukit Timah area in the early morning. The reader, who wanted to be known only as Mr Jeevan, 65, a businessman, said he could smell it while jogging from his home in Jalan Jurong Kechil to the Beauty World MRT Station. “I was starting my daily early morning jog at about 4.45am, and the smell was very strong. I thought at first that someone was burning offerings,” he said.

He added that the smell seemed to have subsided by about 5.15am. In its statement, NEA said the one-hour PM2.5 readings in the east from 4am to 5am ranged from 70 to 73 micrograms per cu m (mcg/m3), in the “elevated” range. PM2.5 is the dominant pollutant during haze episodes. This dropped to the normal range from 6am to 7am, with readings ranging from 19 to 26 mcg/m3. But it rose again from 8am to 11am to “elevated”, ranging from 46 to 62 mcg/m3. The one-hour PM2.5 readings in other regions of Singapore were in the normal range over the same periods of time. As at 5pm, the 24-hour PSI was 65, in the moderate range. And as at 7pm, the Singapore Civil Defence Force said it had not received any reports of incidents that may have caused the smell. Some ST readers in Pasir Ris and Tampines said the smell was back at around 10pm.

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Netizens posting on online forum Reddit said Simei, Pasir Ris, Bedok, Tampines and Marine Parade were among the areas affected, with some noticing the smell from as early as 3am.

Right: Facebook user Espen Tian Bao found a piece of paper in his McDonald’s meal yesterday. PHOTO: ESPEN TIAN BAO / FACEBOOK Far right: Facebook user CK Ng Chung Keat said he found a piece of plastic in his Filet-O-Fish on Wednesday. PHOTO: C.K. NG CHUNG KEAT / FACEBOOK

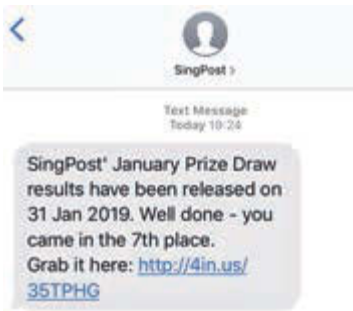


Choo Yun Ting

Two customers of fast-food chain McDonald’s had unpleasant surprises this week when they found stray objects in their food orders. Yesterday, Facebook user Espen Tian Bao ordered a Breakfast Deluxe meal from the chain’s on-line service McDelivery. When he received his meal, he found a piece of paper in his scrambled eggs. His receipt showed that the order was fulfilled by the McDonald’s branch at Safran Punggol. McDonald’s later replied to Espen’s Facebook post, apologising for the incident and asking him to

contact the company privately. “We are concerned to hear about this because we strive to uphold the highest standards of food safety and hygiene,” McDonald’s added. In a separate incident, a CK Ng Chung Keat posted a photo on McDonald’s Facebook page on Wednesday, showing a half-eaten fish burger and a piece of plastic. In his post, the Facebook user said he had bought the Filet-O-Fish at the fast-food chain’s outlet at Tampines Mall on Wednesday morning. He said he found the “piece of plastic embedded inside (the) fish patty” as he was eating it. In his post, he also urged McDonald’s to “work on the quality and hy-

giene checks of (its) products”. In response to queries from The Straits Times, a McDonald’s spokesman said it is aware of the incidents and has been in touch with the affected customers. “Upon being alerted, we took immediate action to send the foreign objects to our quality assurance team for further investigation,” the spokesman said. “We would like to assure all our customers that we are 100 per cent committed to serving safe and quality food at all times.” ST has contacted the National Environment Agency for more information. yuntingc@sph.com.sg



A sample of the message that was sent to SingPost customers in an attempted scam. PHOTO: SINGAPORE POST/FACEBOOK

SingPost warns against scam e-mails

Timothy Goh

SingPost has issued an alert warning people not to be taken in by text messages from scammers. The postal service provider on Thursday uploaded a photo of one such fake message on its Facebook page which tells the recipient to click on a link to claim a prize from SingPost’s “January Prize Draw”. A SingPost spokesman told The Straits Times yesterday that the link in at least one of the fake text messages directs those who click on it to a fraudulent website with the SingPost logo. The spokesman said that SingPost was first alerted to the scam messages on Monday by several of its customers who asked about the links via the SingPost hotline and on its social media platforms. As the week progressed, the number of customers contacting SingPost about the messages spiked, prompting the organisation to put up a warning on its Facebook page. The spokesman added that SingPost has notified the police. In its Facebook post, SingPost said that anyone receiving text messages, calls or e-mails should not provide any personal information or transfer any money that may be requested. In an advisory on its website, SingPost says it does not initiate automated voice calls, and uses English as its primary language of communication. All official e-mails from SingPost are sent from addresses ending with “@singpost.com”, and not from personal e-mail accounts from sites such as Hotmail and Gmail, or other unfamiliar e-mail domains. This is not the first time scammers have targeted SingPost. In November last year, the organisation said it had received several enquiries from customers about calls and e-mails claiming to have come from the organisation. Earlier, in June 2016, it warned the public to ignore any callers who claimed to be from SingPost.

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Suit against dead woman's estate dismissed by court

High Court rules against firm's claims that worker cheated it out of \$1.6m

K.C. Vijayan
Senior Law Correspondent

A marine consultancy has failed in its bid to sue the estate of its late company secretary after claiming she cheated it out of \$1.6 million.

Ms Satwant Kaur died of cancer aged 49, in May 2016, four months after she was granted a discharge not amounting to an acquittal (DNATA) by a district judge in an alleged fraud trial.

The month after her death, Red Star Marine Consultants took civil action in a bid to sue representatives of her estate in the High Court, which dismissed the suit.

Justice Woo Bih Li found the suit could not stand as the company's managing director Dhanvinder Singh (DS) "was not a truthful witness on the main issue".

"There are other aspects of the evidence which suggest that DS was not a truthful witness but it is at present unnecessary to elaborate on them," said the judge in ex tempore decision grounds last week.

Ms Kaur had served as personal secretary to Mr Singh, who alleged that between 2005 and 2012 she had misled him into signing cheques meant for third parties which she then encashed or deposited in her personal account.

During a police probe in September 2012, Ms Kaur admitted in statements that she had received various sums from Red Star with Mr Singh's consent.

But she claimed, among other things, that Mr Singh had agreed to this so that he could evade income tax, alleging that whenever he needed money he would ask her to withdraw it from her personal account for his own use.

Ms Kaur said Mr Singh had told her to buy expensive items for him and that he was aware of properties she owned.

She was charged with eight counts of criminal breach of trust but was granted the DNATA in January 2016 on the application of the Deputy Public Prosecutor following representations by her then lawyer R.S. Bajwa.

In the civil lawsuit that followed in June 2016, Red Star sued the personal representatives of Ms Kaur's estate and her sister Manjit Kaur, claiming that the latter had used money from her late sister to buy two properties.

Red Star, represented by lawyer Mahmood Gaznavi, argued that the late Ms Kaur had fraudulently obtained the \$1.6 million – a claim denied by the estate representa-



Ms Satwant Kaur died of cancer aged 49, in May 2016, four months after she was granted a discharge not amounting to an acquittal by a district judge in a fraud trial. ST FILE PHOTO

tives, who were defended by lawyer Satwant Singh.

Ms Manjit Kaur, defended by lawyers Alfred Lim and Jaime Lye, claimed she was unaware that her late sister's money had come from Red Star. Mr Singh claimed he believed the cheques he signed – listed under an expense item called

"survey charges" – were for genuine purposes.

Mr Singh first told the High Court trial that he checked the survey charges before he signed the company's annual financial statements, but later claimed that he had only looked at the profit figures.

Justice Woo said: "He would have realised the profit figures could not have been so low and something was amiss, if indeed it were true that the deceased had taken the money without his consent."

"It is clear to me that he knew and had consented to the money being taken by the deceased."

Justice Woo dismissed Red Star's claim against the defendants after a 10-day hearing. The plaintiff was also ordered to pay \$120,000 in costs and others to the defendants.

Lawyer Satwant Singh, on the family's behalf, said yesterday: "This has been a long, stressful process for the family since the investigation first started in 2012. The family felt very relieved and vindicated by the judgment."

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SUIT DISMISSED

He would have realised the profit figures could not have been so low and something was amiss, if indeed it were true that the deceased had taken the money without his consent. It is clear to me that he knew and had consented to the money being taken by the deceased.



JUSTICE WOO BIH LI, who found Red Star Marine Consultants' managing director Dhanvinder Singh "not a truthful witness on the main issue".

Man jailed 14 months for cheating offences

Shaffiq Alkhatib

A full-time national serviceman who admitted in court last year to multiple counts of cheating involving more than \$30,000 was awaiting his sentence when another victim lodged a report against him.

Ronny Lee Jia Jie, 21, who has since completed his national service and is now working as a check-in agent for travellers, first pleaded guilty on April 12 last year to 16 counts of cheating.

He had admitted cheating his victims, including telco Singtel, between December 2014 and May 2017.

About a month later, Ms Evelyn Li Shuxian, 30, who sells toiletries online, alerted the police after Lee cheated her of more than \$5,000. He had also attempted to cheat her of more than \$15,000.

Lee later pleaded guilty to three additional cheating charges and one count of attempted cheating. These four charges involved more than \$20,000 and he was sentenced yesterday to 14 months' jail.

In November 2014, Lee volunteered at a brisk walking event held by Nee Soon East Community Centre, where he was given a list of participants and their NRIC numbers for attendance marking.

He used the list to make 49 mobile line applications on Singtel's website.

For each application, he would select the more expensive mobile plans, so he could obtain a bundled mobile phone for free or at heavily discounted prices.

Court documents show that Lee obtained at least three iPhone 6 Plus handsets for free under Singtel's most expensive monthly plan at the time.

He later cancelled 21 applications out of guilt before the phones were delivered but went through with the other applications and obtained 28 phones worth \$30,152 in total.

He sold nine of them to second-hand dealers and on online marketplace Carousell for a total of about \$7,000. Twelve of the unsold phones were recovered and returned to Singtel.



Ronny Lee Jia Jie was awaiting his sentence when another victim made a police report against him.

In March last year, Lee sent a message to Ms Li expressing his interest to be her "product distributor", said Deputy Public Prosecutor Cheng Yuxi.

Lee later ordered from Ms Li more than \$5,000 worth of products and duped her into thinking he had paid for them by showing her screenshots of purported bank transfers.

He also placed another order for \$15,546 worth of toiletries and cosmetics last April, but these products were not delivered to him.

Ms Li alerted the police on May 13 last year after realising that Lee had not transferred any money to her bank account.

In November 2017, Lee had also pretended to be a Mediacorp representative and duped a printing company employee into delivering to him 50 T-shirts worth more than \$600. However, he failed to pay for the products.

For each count of cheating, he could have been jailed for up to 10 years and fined.

ashaffiq@sph.com.sg

Harvey Norman

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Physiotherapist who exposed himself suspended

He is first person hauled up by ministry’s Allied Health Professions Council to face ‘defect in character’ charge

Selina Lum
Law Correspondent

A former senior physiotherapist at Gleneagles Hospital who exposed himself to a secondary schoolgirl at a Bedok void deck in 2015 has been suspended from practice for two years.

Mr Hiraniyan Don Quarrie was also fined \$3,000, censured and ordered to undergo an assessment to

determine if psychiatric treatment was necessary, said the Allied Health Professions Council in a press release yesterday.

He is the first person to be hauled up by the council to face a disciplinary tribunal over a “defect in character” that rendered him unfit for his profession.

The council, which comes under the Ministry of Health, is the regulatory body for healthcare professionals such as clinical psychologists, di-

\$3k

Fine imposed on physiotherapist Hiraniyan Don Quarrie, together with the two-year suspension from practice. He was also ordered to undergo an assessment to determine if psychiatric treatment was needed.

etitians, occupational therapists, podiatrists, radiographers and others.

The disciplinary inquiry arose after the council received information about Mr Don Quarrie’s 2016 conviction on a charge of intending to insult the modesty of a woman, said the press release.

According to the disciplinary tribunal’s published grounds of decision, Mr Don Quarrie had made an “honest declaration” about his criminal conviction when he applied to the council to renew his licence.

The incident took place on the night of Sept 12, 2015, while the 16-year-old victim was studying for her examinations at the void deck.

Standing some 5m away from the table where the victim and her friend were sitting, he exposed himself until she noticed him.

She told her friend, whose back was towards him. Mr Don Quarrie went back behind the pillar but moved out from behind it intermittently and repeated his actions.

The girls were afraid but stayed where they were until they could get away when some other people walked by.

He pleaded guilty on July 27, 2016, and was sentenced to a \$3,000 fine on Oct 6 that year.

A second charge, for exposing himself to a different victim at a playground nearby, was taken into consideration.

Subsequently, the council brought one charge against him at a disciplinary tribunal.

He pleaded guilty at the inquiry on Oct 23 last year.

On the issue of sentencing, the tribunal considered past disciplinary proceedings by the Singapore Medical Council and Law Society, as there were no prior disciplinary cases involving an alleged defect in the character of a registered allied health professional that rendered him unfit for the profession at the time.

Of the cases it considered, the tribunal felt the physiotherapist’s actions were the most comparable to those of a doctor who was suspended for two years and fined \$5,000 for recording upskirt videos of two women.

selinal@sph.com.sg

Police nab man with packets of contraband

A 50-year-old Malaysian motorcyclist was caught with 1,169 packets of chewing tobacco at Woodlands Checkpoint on Thursday.

In a Facebook post, the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) said the packets of chewing tobacco were found in the motorcycle carrier box, the rider’s raincoat bag and haversack, and inside his shoes.

The man was stopped by ICA officers at the checkpoint at about 4.45am before the sachets were discovered.

ICA has referred the case to the Health Sciences Authority.

“Our borders are our first line of defence in safeguarding Singapore’s security,” the authority said.

“The ICA will continue to conduct security checks on passengers and vehicles at the checkpoints to prevent attempts to smuggle in undesirable persons, drugs, weapons, explosives and other contraband.”

Choo Yun Ting



The packets of chewing tobacco (above) seized from the motorcyclist at the Woodlands Checkpoint on Thursday. He had stashed them in his shoes as well as other places. PHOTOS: IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY/ FACEBOOK

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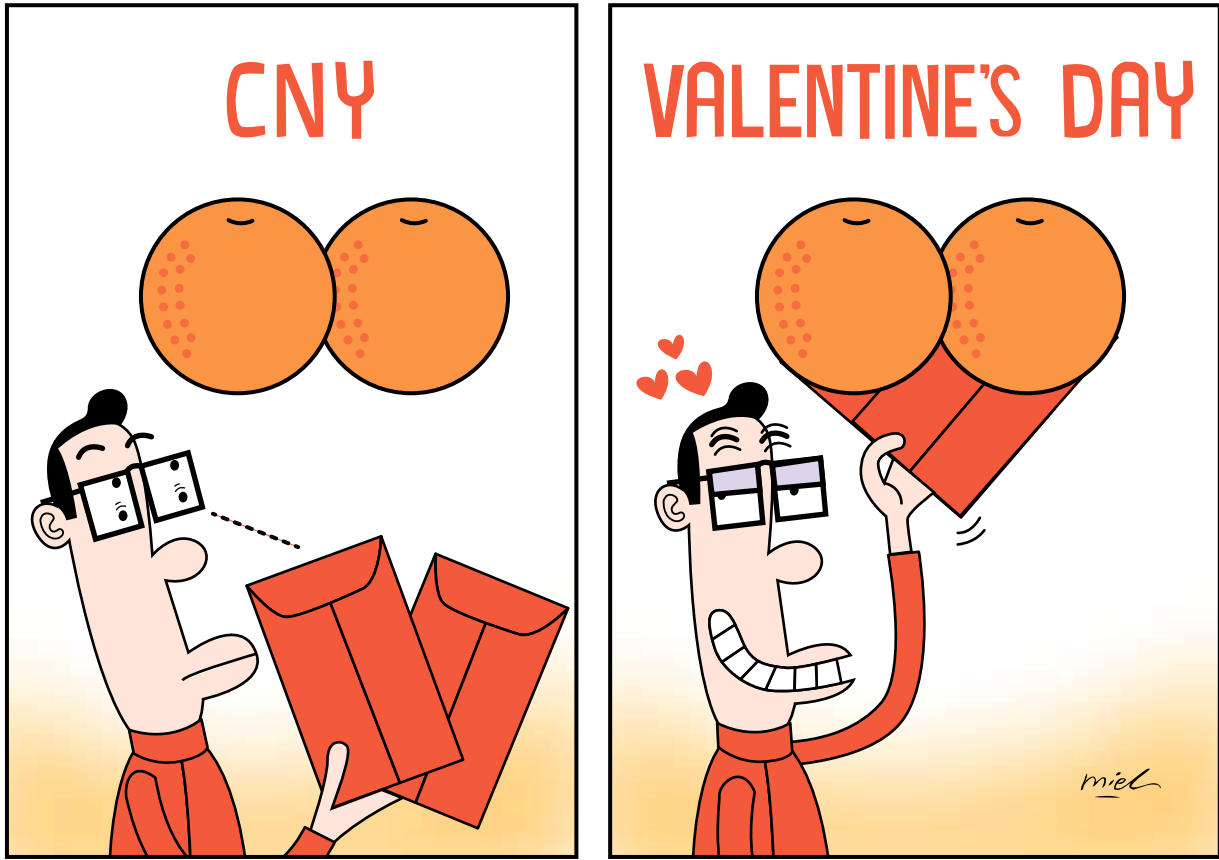
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FORUM

muel's TAKE



Recording devices can protect disputing parties

I understand why there are rules against the use of video-recording devices in private-hire vehicles, but we must also note that such devices may protect parties when false accusations are made (LTA summons driver for interview after complaint is filed against him; Feb 7). Isn't that the reason why police officers, Singapore Civil Defence Force officers and other law enforcement officers are allowed to

carry such devices? Are they required to inform members of the public that they are being recorded? In the case of the Gojek driver and the passenger, what would have happened if there was no recording of the incident? It would have been the driver's word against the passenger's. I urge the Land Transport Authority (LTA) not to penalise the driver based on a technicality. Instead, LTA should use this

incident to review the rules and perhaps consider allowing private-hire and taxi drivers to have inward-facing video cameras installed in their vehicles. A notice can be put up in the vehicle to inform passengers of the video surveillance. This will protect both parties in a dispute, as there will be video and audio evidence. It will also reduce the number of crimes committed against taxi drivers, who sometimes have to deal with drunk passengers who are abusive, or those who refuse to pay their fare. We should use this incident as an opportunity to revise our rules to protect all parties. **S. Suresh**

Boredom is best gift for kids

In an age where people are constantly bombarded with hyper-stimulating screens everywhere, the article on boredom is timely (Let children get bored again; Feb 7). My four-year-old and I thrive on a routine, and within this schedule are slots slated for boredom – at least a couple of hours of it for her daily. During these hours, she gets to choose her own activity. Our home is deliberately absent of a TV and an iPad, so I've watched her paint paper towel spools, scribble her name in multiple languages on her easel, lie on the sofa and daydream, stage conversations and play on her own or with other characters she invented, assemble princess towers out of Lego pieces, bathe her dolls on the balcony and successfully thread needles after

bouts of frustration. Sometimes, she asks that I include her in what I am doing, only to have me send her back to herself with: "This is mummy's me-time, and your me-time." On MRT rides, I opt to read as I leave her to herself next to me. Sometimes she will do the same but, usually, she stages imaginative plays and conversations while passengers look at her with boredom or amusement. She is clearly oblivious to the stares, cognisant of only her character dramatically reflected in the glass who is urgently conducting a rescue mission, belting out a song at a recital or sashaying to a dance piece. In this day and age of technological stimulation overload, boredom might just be the best gift for our children. **Lily Ong (Madam)**

Rethink idea of centralised health record system

I agree with senior health correspondent Salma Khalik that human nature is such that data breaches will happen again (MOH must learn from breaches to build more robust, secure system; Feb 1). We also cannot expect there to be no errant doctors or medical professionals who try to misuse data or access the system for personal motives. It may, therefore, be worth rethinking the proposal that requires all healthcare institutions to input the data of their patients electronically so that it can be part of the National Electronic Health Record (NEHR) system, given the spate of incidents involving breach or misuse of data. There has to be a more secure system that achieves the same objectives without having to amass the data on a common platform. For example, we can explore the idea of having medical data travel with the patient, by making it mandatory for people to carry a medical record card containing their data in a chip. This card will be presented to the doctor when the patient receives treatment, and will be updated accordingly. I can understand the rationale for setting up a centralised system – to give doctors a complete picture of a patient's medical condition, and it could save lives in emergency situations. But we have lived without such a system for so long, and it is hard to see how the benefits of the NEHR outweigh the risks of the system being hacked or misused. Is it possible to achieve the same goals in a safer manner? **Susan Tan (Ms)**

Allow inward-facing cameras in private-hire cars

In a recent viral video, a Gojek rider can be seen accusing her driver of kidnapping her by saying that he was holding her hostage (Gojek rider's dispute with driver goes viral; Feb 2). Kidnapping is a very serious offence, and the fact that the rider did not hesitate in making such a claim makes me wonder about the rights of the driver, especially if he

didn't have a recording of the dispute to explain his side of the story. It is time the authorities look into protecting drivers who are just out to make an honest living. They should consider making it compulsory for private-hire vehicles and taxis to have inward-facing cameras. There are definitely many advantages to doing so. When people are aware of an inward-facing camera, they will behave themselves and adhere to traffic rules, like buckling up for their own safety. Also, should there be any dispute during the journey, this could help to provide evidence. **Peh Qin Yun**

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Govt agencies must have zero tolerance for weaknesses

I am intrigued by how, year in and year out, there are significant lapses and systemic weaknesses found in financial controls, IT controls and governance norms across various government ministries and agencies (Watchdog calls for fixing root causes of recurrent lapses in public sector; Feb 2).

This year is no exception and it shows that, despite assurances from the respective organisations that they have tightened their procedures and controls, there is no let-up in procurement, IT and financial weaknesses, as well as conflicts of interest and

governance issues on the part of these organisations.

All too often, government departments and agencies have in place neatly drawn-up manuals of procedures and instructions that are religiously complied with initially but tend to lose their way with the passage of time.

Factors like shortage of time, urgency, shortage of manpower, unforeseen circumstances, failure to understand rules and oversight are often cited as reasons for irregularities, even though proper instructions are in force.

Consequently, failure to comply with prescribed controls leads to

enforcement becoming lax and procedures not being adhered to.

Whatever the reasons, it is imperative that our public institutions meet the highest standards of probity, transparency and accountability.

Any system falling short of these standards would create the ideal breeding ground for corruption that eats into the vitals of government machinery.

There is, therefore, a dire need to not only professionalise procedures to make them more accountable but, more importantly, to train public officers and conduct regular compliance reviews too.

Perhaps electronic systems that could save money, enhance transparency and minimise human intervention could be considered.

In any case, government ministries and agencies should learn to think out of the box and develop a system that provides zero tolerance for weaknesses in the use and management of public funds.

This can be achieved if due diligence is exercised by all concerned. As citizens, we expect the proper management of public funds and resources so that the integrity of our systems and procedures can be maintained.

V. Subramaniam (Dr)

PI syllabus must include teaching pupils basics

It was disconcerting to read about a teacher's social media post saying that parents should be responsible for teaching their children to read (Who should teach kids to read: Teachers or parents?; Jan 28).

As an English language teacher with more than 30 years' experience, I can confidently say that just because a child cannot read in Primary 1 does not mean the child, parent or teacher is lazy or stupid. Not all parents are trained or naturally good teachers.

Some parents may simply need to work and may not be able to secure jobs that enable them to be at home at the right times to support their child with his schoolwork.

Children aren't a one size fits all. Some perfectly intelligent people I knew as children learnt to read only when they were nearly in Primary 2.

This is despite them having trained teachers as parents who spent plenty of time trying to teach them to read before and during Primary 1, as well as attending two years of kindergarten education.

These "slow to read" children have since gone on to become successful and have turned out to be well in the top 10 per cent of their scholastic cohort. The evidence suggests that a

proper reading syllabus should take into account age-appropriate and development-appropriate methods and material.

Forcing a child to read when he is not ready is a waste of resources and can result in emotional damage. A careful examination of each case by trained teachers is necessary to assess whether the slow learner is simply not at that stage yet, or has a learning disability, a behavioural issue or home issue that is interfering with the learning process.

Our cohorts are now shrinking and schools are being merged, so there is a surplus of teachers who can be retrained as adjunct teachers to help pupils who may need more attention in Primary 1.

We should also allow children who can already read to challenge the system and enter straight into Primary 2 if they and their parents wish it, and they meet the requirements for all subjects.

This will take care of the vociferous minority who insist their children should not be held back by slower pupils in the class.

For everyone else, the Ministry of Education needs to set a syllabus for Primary 1 which involves teaching the basics, including reading and writing.

This is a solution which shouldn't involve large extra budgets or extensive new programmes, but a better use of existing resources and teachers instead.

Chan Mei Mei (Madam)

Grades an important gauge for other qualities

Employers still tend to look at grades when hiring, which is the case for several reasons (Hiring: Grades matter but other factors vital; Jan 31).

Grades are not merely indicative of a person's intelligence or academic prowess.

Tied closely to a student's grades are factors like his willingness to work hard, level of motivation and ability to work in a team, which is

called for in some group projects. Such attributes are also what employers look for in employees.

Being attentive in school and attentive to details, and having respect for authority and teachers are other desirable attributes which often lead to better grades.

An inattentive student who does not hand in his work on time can hardly be expected to score well.

This respect for authority is likely to carry over into one's working life.

Employers also look for "curiosity, humility and a willingness to learn". Without having some innate curiosity and being willing to learn, can students achieve outstanding results in the first place? I doubt so.

Thus, it is not surprising for the Economic Development Board's

managing director Chng Kai Fong to say that there is no substitute for grades.

Of course, many other qualities are also crucial at the workplace, but most of these cannot be accurately and objectively measured or ascertained in the course of a job interview.

It may be for the employee to prove himself in these other areas once he starts working, to maintain his foothold in the organisation he works for.

Low Siew Hua (Ms)

EDB building strong R&D culture in Singapore

We thank Mr Liu Fook Thim for his letter (Focus on developing local R&D capabilities; Feb 1).

Mr Liu suggested that the Singapore Economic Development Board (EDB) focus on getting multinational corporations to move their research and development work to Singapore to develop local R&D capabilities.

Indeed, that is what EDB has been doing. Today, R&D spending by foreign companies constitutes close to 70 per cent of Singapore's annual business expenditure on R&D (BerD).

From 2010 to 2016, the annual

BerD by foreign companies increased from \$2.8 billion to \$4 billion, which is a compounded annual growth rate of 6.4 per cent.

Over the same time period, Singapore's overall BerD increased from \$3.9 billion to \$5.7 billion.

R&D activities conducted here include basic and applied research, and experimental development to produce new or improved materials, products and devices.

We will continue to promote companies to conduct R&D here and build up our local base of R&D talent and capabilities. We want Singapore to be a place where

companies, local and foreign, create new products and services.

EDB's mission is to attract quality investments that create good jobs for Singaporeans, provide business opportunities for Singapore-based companies and also develop new capabilities in Singapore.

These investments range from R&D to manufacturing and services, as many of these activities are interdependent and interconnected.

Praveen Randhawa (Ms)
Director, Public Affairs
Singapore Economic Development Board

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Is the International Baccalaureate a better fit for our students than the A levels?

Students who stress over their future opportunities being purely dependent on exams would fare much better in the IB system.

Sharlynn Ng

Only if we want to lower our standards.

Valerian Hall-Chen

Rather than choosing one, give the student the option to choose.

Joseph Wong Meng Choi

Can socio-economic inequality affect a child's reading ability?

Both my parents were illiterate hawkers. But I had wonderful teachers. I picked up English and other skills from them. So, no, I don't think it's inequality, but probably a lack of good teachers with a good standard of English.

Colette Lim

It is a matter of priorities. Poor or not, we have a choice on how to spend our time. All of us have an equal amount of time.

Javier Ling



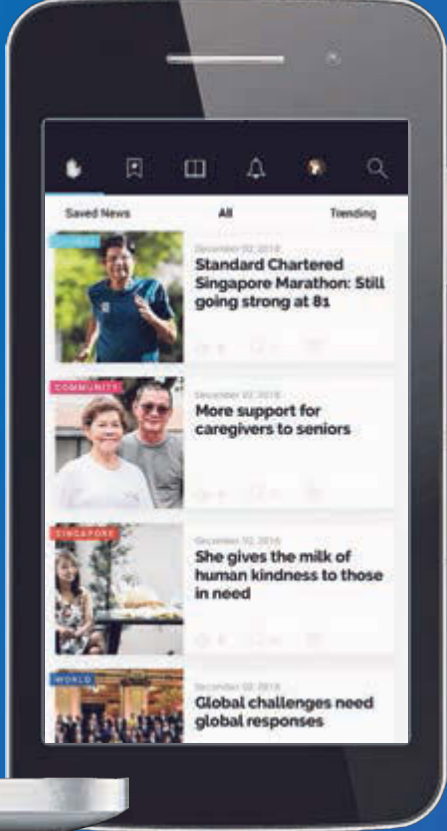
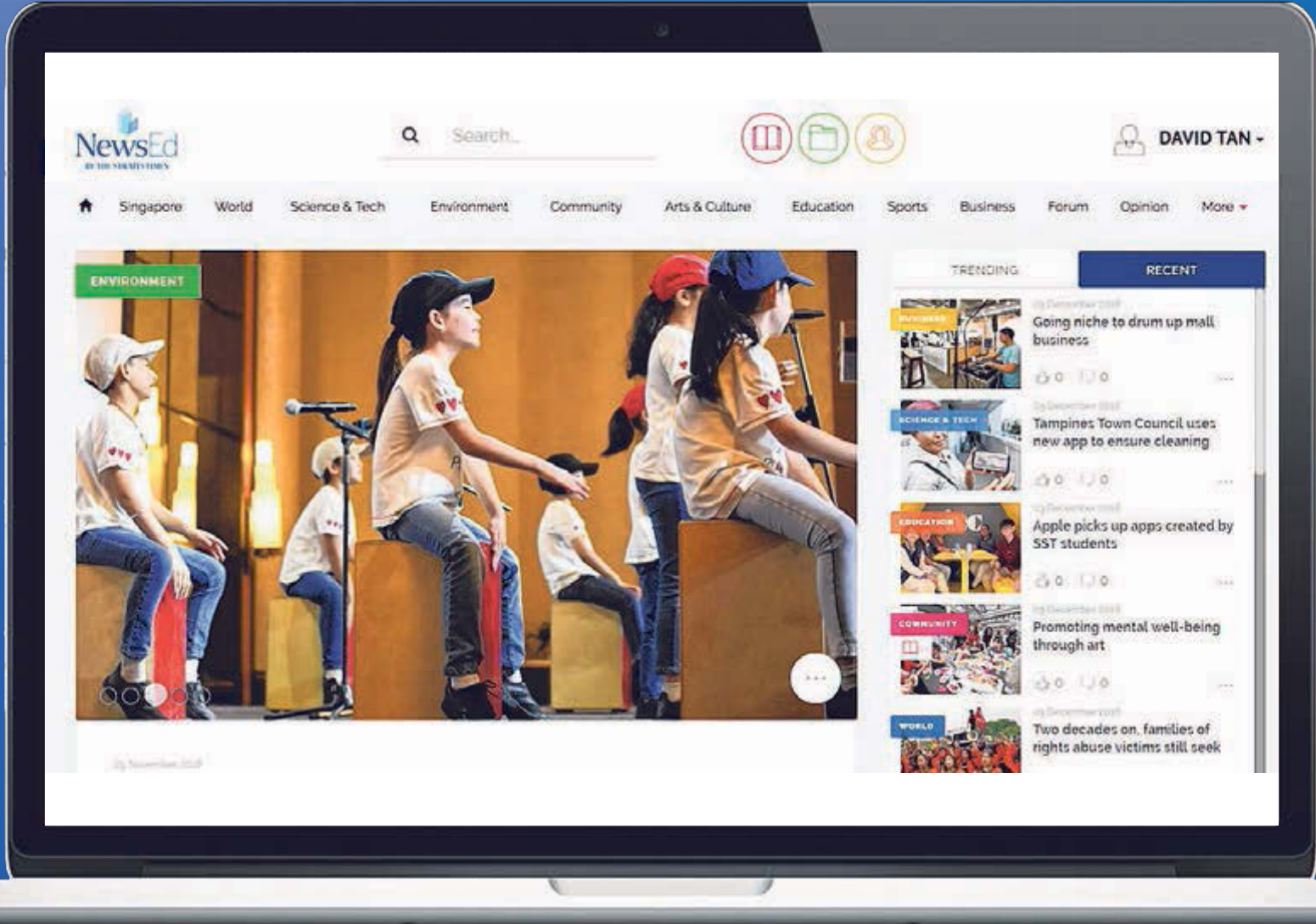
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View of Yishun

An aerial view of Yishun – formerly known as Nee Soon – housing estate on July 23, 2011. The development of Yishun started in 1976 with the first HDB flats being built in the Chong Pang area.

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Bright future for floating solar panels in S-E Asia

Thailand and Singapore among nations keen on such projects in land-scarce region

BANGKOK • Solar power companies in South-east Asia that are competing for land with agriculture, industry and expanding populations have found an innovative alternative – to put floating panels in lakes, dams, reservoirs and the sea.

Earlier this week, state utility Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (Egat) said it would submit a proposal for a 45MW floating solar plant in the Sirindhorn dam in the country's north-east.

Egat plans to invest in about 16 such projects across nine dams in the country, deputy governor Thepparat Theppitak told reporters.

Elsewhere in the region, Singapore is developing one of the world's largest offshore floating solar systems in the Strait of Johor to the north of the island.

"In land-scarce countries like Singapore, the widespread use of PV

(photovoltaic) systems is hindered by space constraints and limited roof space," said Mr Frank Phuan, chief executive of Sunseap Group, which is building the system.

The platform has to be "more robust" than systems in reservoirs or lakes to withstand tougher conditions on the open sea, and to overcome barnacles that may grow on it, he added.

It was also difficult to find a spot in the sea that was not frequented by shipping vessels, he said.

The project, which is supported by Singapore's Economic Development Board, will be located north of the Woodlands Waterfront Park.

Despite the challenges, floating solar systems are growing quickly in Asia alongside those on the ground and on roofs, according to the Solar Energy Research Institute of Singapore (Seris).



A floating solar photovoltaic cell test-bed in Tengeh Reservoir in Tuas in 2016. While such panels cost more to install, they are up to 16 per cent more efficient because the water's cooling effect helps reduce thermal losses and extend their life, according to the Solar Energy Research Institute of Singapore. ST FILE PHOTO

While floating panels are more expensive to install, they are up to 16 per cent more efficient because the water's cooling effect helps reduce thermal losses and extend their life, according to Seris.

The panels also reduce evaporation from water bodies when temperatures are warm, thus saving fresh water for drinking.

"The greater efficiency offsets the higher cost of installation," said Seris senior financial analyst Celine Paton. "Technological advances should soon bring them on a par

with ground systems" in terms of cost, she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

South-east Asia is particularly well suited for floating panels because of the scarcity of land and because they can be easily installed in the region's many hydropower dams, where they can use existing transmission systems, she added.

On the whole, the growing clean energy sector, including solar generation, can be a boost for the economy. New investments in Singapore's clean energy industry, for in-

stance, will generate \$180 million in annual business spending and create about 1,000 professional jobs in the next five years, Singapore's Minister for the Environment and Water Resources Masagos Zulkifli said last November.

China currently accounts for most of the more than 1.1 gigawatts of floating solar capacity now installed, according to the World Bank. Meanwhile, India recently announced a plan to develop 10 gigawatts of floating solar capacity.

The technology's potential is

about 400 gigawatts, or about as much generating capacity as all the solar photovoltaic panels installed in the world through 2017, the World Bank said.

There are concerns that the panels could block sunlight, affecting marine life, and that the electrical systems might not withstand the onslaught of water.

But backers say the technology is proven, and that the panels cover too small a surface area to create major problems.

REUTERS, THE STRAITS TIMES

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Tata Motors shares plunge on record loss

Biggest drop in 26 years after \$5.1b quarterly net loss due to write-down of luxury unit

TOUGH MEASURES

Tata Motors has bitten the bullet... They are reinforcing that they are serious about achieving a turnaround, saving costs and taking measures that might be tough.



MR AJAY BODKE, the Mumbai-based head of investment strategy at Prabhudas Lilladher.

MUMBAI • Tata Motors shares had their biggest drop in 26 years in Mumbai trading yesterday after the company posted a record loss in Indian corporate history because of a write-down in its luxury Jaguar Land Rover Automotive unit.

The stock drop of as much as 30 per cent was the biggest since February 1993 on an intraday basis and sent Tata Motors shares to their lowest level in almost a decade.

Plummeting sales in China are compounding Jaguar Land Rover's challenges that include the industry's shift away from vehicles powered by petrol and diesel – a stronghold for the company.

Its heavy production presence in Britain exposes it to a disorderly Brexit, the likelihood of which has risen over the past few weeks, Fitch Ratings said this week. The rating company has placed Tata Motors on negative credit watch.

"Jaguar Land Rover is facing headwinds on multiple fronts, including geopolitical uncertainty and technological disruption, apart from a sluggish demand scenario in a strong market like China," said analyst Debjit Maji at Stewart & Mackerr-



Jaguar Land Rover's challenges include plummeting sales in China and the industry's shift away from vehicles powered by petrol and diesel. Its heavy production presence in Britain also exposes it to a disorderly Brexit. PHOTO: REUTERS

tich Wealth Management in Kolkata. "For Jaguar Land Rover, it will be catastrophic if Britain goes for a no-deal Brexit."

Tata Motors shares closed down 17.6 per cent yesterday after falling as much as 30 per cent. They had already slumped more than 50 per cent in the past 12 months through Thursday on concerns about Jaguar Land Rover's waning sales, profitability, high capital-expenditure need and the impact of Brexit.

Carmakers around the world are getting hurt by the slump in China, whose car market shrank for the first time in more than two decades last year.

Daimler and BMW reduced profit forecasts last year amid pressures from the United States-China trade war that has hit car demand, while Hyundai Motor said last month it was letting workers go as it reviews production plans in the world's biggest market.

The "overall performance continued to be impacted by challenging market conditions in China", Dr Ralf Speth, head of Jaguar Land Rover, said in a statement on Thursday. "We continue to work closely with Chinese retailers to respond to current market conditions."

The company said it was overhauling its China operation, cutting back on deliveries to reduce stock. It has also streamlined its commercial policies to help compensate for retailers' losses, and is launching extensive on-site training programmes to improve the customer experience as well as operations.

Tata Motors wrote down its investment in Jaguar Land Rover by US\$3.9 billion (S\$5.3 billion) due to market challenges, especially in China, technology disruptions and rising debt costs.

The parent's net loss was 270 billion rupees (S\$5.1 billion) in the three months to end-December, ex-

ceeding the deficit reported by Indian Oil Corp in 2012.

"Tata Motors has bitten the bullet," Mr Ajay Bodke, the Mumbai-based head of investment strategy at Prabhudas Lilladher, said by phone.

"They are reinforcing that they are serious about achieving a turnaround, saving costs and taking measures that might be tough."

As part of Jaguar Land Rover's plans to achieve £2.5 billion (S\$4.4 billion) of investment, working capital and profit improvements by March 2020, the company last month said it would slash its global workforce by 4,500.

This is expected to result in a one-time exceptional redundancy cost of around £200 million for the luxury unit of Tata Motors.

The cost of the voluntary scheme will be recognised in the quarter ending March 31, the company said. BLOOMBERG

Ambani shares dumped after \$2.4b wiped out

MUMBAI • Lenders dumped shares of Anil Ambani group companies they held as collateral after their market value plummeted about 126 billion rupees (S\$2.4 billion) this month, adding to the litany of woes plaguing the Indian billionaire.

Creditors sold a total 5.5 billion shares in four companies – Reliance Power, Reliance Infrastructure, Reliance Communications and Reliance Capital – leading to a 3 to 8 percentage point reduction in founders' stakes in these firms, according to filings.

The fragile investor sentiment for the Anil Ambani group was dealt another blow after its wireless unit, Reliance Communications, said on Feb 1 that it plans to file for bankruptcy.

The sell-off spread to other group firms, eroding the value of the shares pledged as collateral. IDBI Trusteeship Services, which held Reliance Power shares, said it sold the assets as the borrowers "defaulted on the terms".

Reliance Communications has seen its market value drop by more than half this week, while shares of Reliance Power and Reliance Infrastructure have crashed almost 60 per cent each. Reliance Capital has tumbled 34 per cent.

The share pledge problem has also hit other Indian companies, like media tycoon Subhash Chandra's Essel Group, which signed a pact with its lenders after a 27 per cent slump in the flagship Zee Entertainment Enterprises on Jan 25. BLOOMBERG

Hermes says sales in China strong despite economic slowdown



Hermes yesterday reported a 9.6 per cent rise in fourth-quarter sales at constant exchange rates, unchanged from three months earlier. Sales in the Asia-Pacific region, excluding Japan, were up 13.1 per cent at constant currencies, picking up from 11.7 per cent growth in the third quarter. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

PARIS • French luxury handbag label Hermes yesterday said sales momentum in its Chinese stores stayed strong in the fourth quarter, adding to reassuring signals from rivals over enduring demand in one of the industry's biggest markets.

Luxury groups rely on Chinese consumers for over a third of their sales, sparking investor jitters over the potential fallout for the sector from China's slowing economic growth and the Washington-Beijing trade war.

Labels heavily exposed to markets where Chinese tourism appears to be on the wane, such as Coach owner Tapestry or jeweller Tiffany in the United States, have suffered as a result.

But some of the biggest luxury goods players, including LVMH's Paris-based Louis Vuitton, have recently stressed that demand for their wares was if anything picking up in China.

"We are still growing strongly in Asia, we did not see any change in momentum in our stores in China," Hermes chief executive Axel Dumas said yesterday, after the group posted a 9.6 per cent rise in fourth-quarter sales at constant exchange rates, unchanged from three months earlier.

Sales in the Asia-Pacific region, excluding Japan, were up 13.1 per cent at constant currencies, picking up from 11.7 per cent growth in the third quarter.

Fourth-quarter revenues rose 10.1 per cent on a reported basis to €1.7 billion (S\$2.6 billion).

Hermes, which launched its e-commerce site in China at the end of last year, will roll out its online business to other Asian countries, Mr Dumas added.

The French label, whose US\$10,000-plus (S\$13,500-plus) Birkin bags are famed for drawing waiting lists, said it expected its operating margin to be close to 34 per cent for last year, potentially dipping from the 34.6 per cent record reached in 2017. Its full results will be released on March 20.

Mr Dumas said anti-government "yellow vest" protests in France late last year had weighed on some of the business it usually does with tourists in Paris, but added that spending had shifted to its stores elsewhere, including in Italy and Britain. Luxury boutiques closed their doors on several successive Saturdays after the protests descended into riots in early December.

Hermes, originally a saddle specialist, said this week it would build a 17th French leather goods workshop in Normandy in 2021. REUTERS

Sears saved as US court approves \$7b sale to chairman

NEW YORK • A US bankruptcy judge on Thursday approved Sears Holdings chairman Edward Lampert's US\$5.2 billion (S\$7 billion) takeover of the beleaguered retailer, allowing the department store chain to avert liquidation and preserve tens of thousands of jobs.

Judge Robert Drain approved the sale after a hearing spanning several days in a federal bankruptcy court. He overruled objections, including from an unsecured credi-

tors' committee, which said the process for selling Sears was unfair to them and argued for a liquidation.

Mr Lampert, who arranged an US\$11 billion merger between Sears and discounter Kmart in 2005 and tried for years to boost business, wins another chance to try to revive what was once the biggest United States retailer.

Mr Lampert, the only bidder offering to keep Sears alive through his

hedge fund, ESL Investments, agreed to a deal for 425 stores after round-the-clock negotiations last month. The takeover aims to preserve about 45,000 jobs.

"I conclude that the process here was proper and appropriate," Judge Drain said in his reasoning for approving the sale.

Terms of the sale allow for some litigation to continue against Mr Lampert and ESL.

Sears chief restructuring officer Mohsin Meghji and company directors Bill Transier and Alan Carr were among those questioned on a witness stand during the court hearing on Mr Lampert's offer.

Mr Lampert stepped down as chief executive when Sears filed for bankruptcy on Oct 15, though he re-

mained the retailer's chairman, largest shareholder and creditor.

A restructuring committee of independent directors negotiated with Mr Lampert and his advisers.

Sears will still face fierce competition from big rivals including Amazon.com and Walmart.

Founded in the 19th century, Sears built itself into an American institution with its famous mail-order catalogues. But it failed to adapt to the modern era of online shopping.

Mr Lampert's offer came after the retailer had been pushed to the brink of liquidation multiple times. In the end, he boosted his initial offer by US\$800 million, largely in the assumption of Sears' bills for taxes and merchandise.

Money owed to lawyers, bankers

and other advisers working on the retailer's bankruptcy case also proved contentious as Sears lacked enough money to meet all its obligations.

Mr Lampert agreed to take on one of the company's bankruptcy loans, which debtors typically repay, in its entirety.

He was allowed to use US\$1.3 billion Sears owed him as currency in the offer, a manoeuvre known as a credit bid, which some creditors had opposed. He received a legal release protecting him from litigation regarding money he loaned Sears.

Mr Lampert still remains exposed to lawsuits related to certain transactions he engaged in while leading Sears before filing for bankruptcy. REUTERS



Sears Holdings chairman Edward Lampert agreed to a deal for 425 stores after talks last month. The takeover aims to preserve about 45,000 jobs.

Australian central bank cuts growth, inflation forecasts

Major concern is impact of falling property prices on economy

SYDNEY • Australia's central bank has cut growth and inflation forecasts in response to weaker consumption as it assesses how slumping property prices could reverberate across the economy.

In its quarterly update of forecasts, the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) drilled deeply into factors affecting the outlook amid a darkening picture at home and abroad.

Economic growth in the year to June 2019 was cut to 2.5 per cent from 3.25 per cent, and by half a percentage point in the following 12 months, according to the statement on monetary policy released yesterday.

"The board has paid close attention to developments in the housing market and the implications

that lower prices might have for construction activity and households' spending decisions," the RBA said. "The board has also considered how the prospects for consumption growth would be affected if household income growth does not pick up."

The Australian dollar fell, buying 70.66 US cents at 12.46pm in Sydney, compared with 70.95 cents before the report. Traders ramped up bets on an interest-rate cut by November, with futures data now showing a better than 90 per cent chance.

RBA governor Philip Lowe this week abandoned a policy tightening bias and instead sees the chances of an interest-rate cut or a hike as "more evenly balanced".

While the jobs market remains a source of strength, a slew of weaker data in the past two months – mainly connected to the deteriorating housing market – forced the



RBA to adjust its stance.

The RBA was taken aback by the statistics bureau's recent downward revision of consumption growth for the past three years, and as a result "the starting point for GDP growth forecasts is three-quarters of a percentage point lower than previously expected".

It now predicts consumption

growth to be 2.75 per cent over the forecast period rather than the 3 per cent earlier estimated.

Still, the central bank is persisting in its view that a stronger labour market will eventually lead to faster wage growth and a pickup in inflation to within the 2 to 3 per cent target range. That has been the thinking behind keeping the cash rate

The RBA said it paid close attention to developments in the housing market and the implications of lower property prices. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

steady at a record-low 1.5 per cent for 2½ years.

The forecasts show core inflation reaching 2 per cent at the end of this year and headline inflation reaching there in mid-2020. Headline inflation is predicted to slump to 1.25 per cent in the year through June this year due to lower oil prices.

The central bank estimated that a sustained 15 per cent fall in oil prices would cut half a point from the consumer price index and could "cumulatively" lower core inflation by a quarter point through indirect effects over two to three years.

The RBA acknowledged it was concerned about the increasing number of factors that could disrupt its central scenario, including from offshore. Downside risks to the global outlook have increased, it said, noting trade tensions "are beginning to affect the level and pattern of trade".

It said a range of indicators "suggests a more pronounced slowing" of momentum in China. Some of that stems from efforts to rein in shadow financing as well as the impact of tariff increases.

Australia is the most China-dependent economy in the developed world.

Yesterday's statement contained the usual forecasts for growth, inflation and unemployment – seen falling to 4.75 per cent in December 2020; but it also contained a separate sheet of more detailed forecasts on everything from household consumption to wages to public demand. BLOOMBERG

Why Shanghai's new Nasdaq-style tech board may be a game changer

HONG KONG • The detailed rules for a Nasdaq-style start-up board in Shanghai have fuelled hopes among early-stage companies that the new regime could bring about positive changes in China's stance towards raising equity that investors have been seeking.

Published just two months after Chinese President Xi Jinping surprised financiers by announcing plans for the board, the rules come as China and the United States are locked in a bitter trade war, with Chinese technology firms in the crossfire.

Here's what the board is expected to look like and why it matters:

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

The biggest problem for companies hoping to tap China's existing equity capital markets is that public listings are entirely overseen by regulators who have often halted the process for months on end during times of market weakness and produced a backlog of 18 months at times.

China's rules, like those of many emerging markets, also require initial public offering (IPO) candidates to be profitable – something many capital-seeking start-ups have not yet managed.

Both concerns will be addressed by the new "technology innovation board" with a registration-based system limiting official powers to control the timing of listings, and new rules that allow some "pre-profit" companies to go public.

The line-up of sectors able to list is important too.

The main ones are in emerging industries considered strategically important, including high-tech equipment manufacturing, new energy, biotechnology, big data and cloud computing.

Some of the more sensitive industries, such as network information security and coding technology, are not allowed to receive foreign capital or list overseas, meaning a domestic funding alternative is especially important.

WHY IS SHANGHAI DOING THIS?

China has long wanted its home-grown tech champions to list closer to home.

Many of the best-known Chinese groups, including e-commerce firm Alibaba and gaming and social media giant Tencent, chose to raise funds in international markets such as New York and Hong Kong – and investors there, not in China, reaped the benefits.

Last year, Chinese companies raised US\$64.2 billion (\$87 billion) globally – almost a third of the worldwide total – via IPOs, but less than one-third of that was raised in Shanghai or Shenzhen, according to Refinitiv data.



The skyline of Shanghai's Lujiazui Financial District of Pudong. China hopes to address start-up concerns with Shanghai's new "technology innovation board", which has a registration-based system limiting official powers to control the timing of listings, and new rules that allow some "pre-profit" companies to go public and tap the country's existing equity capital markets. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Shenzhen's start-up friendly board, ChiNext, set up in 2009, and once a hotbed of speculation, is struggling to gain traction. It saw only 27 listings last year, with volumes slumping 43 per cent from the previous year to US\$4.3 billion, Refinitiv data show.

Shenzhen's main stock exchange has not done much better, with IPO fund raising slumping 39 per cent last year to US\$8.1 billion.

An earlier effort, the New Third Board set up in Beijing in 2006, has suffered a similar fate and is languishing amid poor liquidity and waning investor interest.

In the past year, the Shanghai Stock Exchange has sought to aggressively expand its offering, working on plans to help overseas-listed Chinese companies sell shares at home, while also building a link

with London to allow British companies to raise funds in China.

The new board is also viewed as a move by Beijing to counter US curbs on China's technology advancement. Washington is demanding that Beijing tighten rules around intellectual property theft and forced technology transfers.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT TIMING AND DETAILS?

Listing hopefuls can submit an application as soon as the rules are officially published. The draft rules published just before Chinese New Year are open for consultation until Feb 28.

China aims to officially launch the board by June, according to local media.

In addition to the US-style registration system, the new board will

let loss-making firms raise money publicly for the first time, as long as they own core technologies or have growth potential. A tech committee is being formed to decide who meets those standards.

Companies with weighted voting rights will also be accepted, helping Shanghai compete better with Hong Kong and New York, which already allow companies to weigh votes in favour of small groups and company founders.

The draft rules also propose letting new board stocks rise or fall by up to 20 per cent a day, compared with a 10 per cent cap currently in general use.

There will also be no daily limits for the first five days of trading in new stocks, compared with the existing 44 per cent limit on other boards.

WHO ARE THE LIKELY WINNERS AND LOSERS?

Chinese tech start-ups and the investors who pick the future superstars from among them are the most likely winners.

If successful, the board could also position Shanghai as a capital-raising competitor to Hong Kong and New York, which between them accounted for 68.7 per cent of the money raised through Chinese IPOs last year.

The biggest loser risks being Hong Kong, which has worked to position itself as the international gateway to and from China.

IPOs are big business in the city and Chinese companies represent almost all the funds raised, unlike in New York, where they are only a fraction of the total. REUTERS

Chinese tech start-ups and the investors who pick the future superstars from among them are the most likely winners... The biggest loser risks being Hong Kong, which has worked to position itself as the international gateway to and from China. IPOs are big business in the city and Chinese companies represent almost all the funds raised, unlike in New York, where they are only a fraction of the total.

Order for Commerzbank unit to pay Long Well \$41m upheld

The Court of Appeal has upheld an earlier High Court order for a Commerzbank-owned unit to pay Long Well Group \$41 million over a sourced investment, Long Well said in a statement yesterday.

The dispute centred on certain

Libyan oil and gas concessions that the unit and Indonesia state-owned energy company Pertamina had successfully bid for in October 2005.

Singapore-headquartered Long Well, a private conglomerate with

interests in energy, construction and property in South-east Asia, had sought to invest about US\$18 million (\$24 million) in the concessions.

In March last year, the High Court ordered the unit – Commerzbank

Asset Management Asia (CAMA) – to pay \$41 million to Long Well.

The latest ruling concludes the long-running case, which began in 2012.

CAMA's lawyers could not be reached for comment.

Hang Seng



Shanghai Comp



Nikkei 225



Dow Jones



BullsAndBears

STI flat despite fresh concerns over trade war

Local investors shrug off Trump's latest comments, but Asian bourses end in the red

Navin Sregantan

There have been plenty of fire-works in this week of Chinese New Year festivities but few have gone off on share markets, even when United States President Donald Trump put a word in.

That was the case yesterday when investors had to confront the trade war yet again.

This time, it was US economic adviser Larry Kudlow warning that Washington and Beijing have a long way to go in their talks.

Mr Trump then leapt in to add fuel to the fire by saying his meeting with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping would not occur before tariffs were due to rise on March 1.

That might have sparked a sell-off a few weeks ago, but jaded investors just shrugged and left the Straits Times Index (STI) flat yesterday with an increase of just 1.4 points, or 0.04 per cent, to 3,202.04.

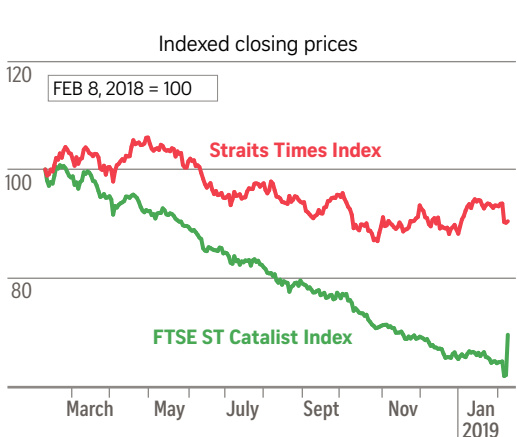
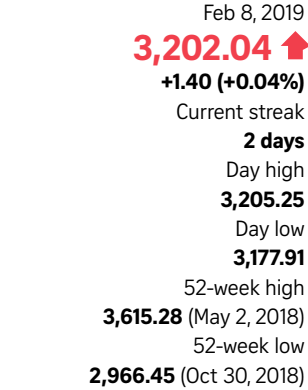
Turnover stood at 1.19 billion shares worth \$965.41 million with losers outpacing gainers 222 to 150.

The most active was marine firm Ezion Holdings, which lost 4.3 per cent to 4.5 cents with 88.6 million shares changing hands.

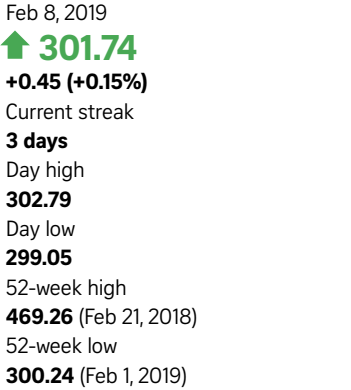
Index-listed companies were also actively traded.

ThaiBev was the most active,

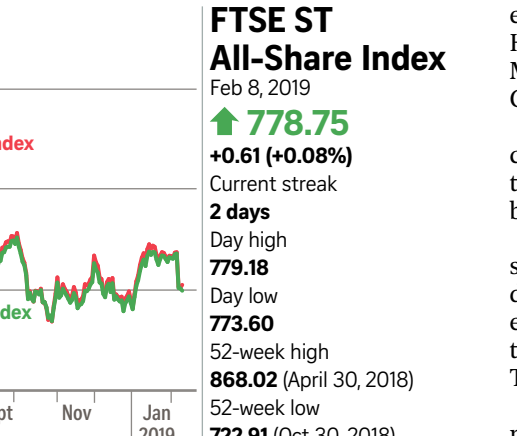
Straits Times Index



FTSE ST Catalist Index



FTSE ST All-Share Index



down 2 per cent to 72 cents with 48 million shares done.

Yangzijiang Shipbuilding also saw heavy trading with 24.9 million shares traded as it rose 1.4 per cent to \$1.45.

Meanwhile, Best World continued to rally, ending 4.9 per cent

higher at \$3.19 with 5.37 million shares traded.

Reits fared well. CapitalLand Mall Trust was among the top performers, with its units closing up 1.3 per cent to \$2.40. Keppel Reit thrived as well, 1.7 per cent ahead at \$1.21.

Elsewhere in Asia, Mr Trump's

comments seemed to have a bigger effect, sending Australia, Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea and Malaysia into the red. Mainland China and Taiwan were closed.

The Hang Seng dipped 0.16 per cent on its first day back after a three-day break, while Japan's benchmark lost 2 per cent.

IG market strategist Pan Jingyi said: "The key culprit for weighing down Asia markets has been the latest uncertainty in US-China relations induced by President Donald Trump's comments."

A lot hinges on the outcome of next week's meeting between the US and China in Beijing, she added.

"Broadly speaking, Singapore Reits have been viewed as being rather attractive at the start of the year from a valuation standpoint, but also as a good defensive strategy going into a year still rife with uncertainties."

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Straits Times Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD %	P/BV
278	245	Ascendas Reit	275	+1	8869	5.8	1.3
192	161	CapitaCom Trust	190	+1	6781	4.6	1
380	298	Capitaland	332	-3	5702	3.6	0.7
243	195	CapitaMall Trust	240	+3	12698	4.8	1.2
1359	780	CityDev	916	-5	1725	2	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro	234	-2	8630	4.4	2
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2430	-3	2766	5.9	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US900	+1	313	2.3	-
133	85.5	Genting Sing	111	+1	18309	3.2	1.8
37	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	25	-0.5	5376	3.2	0.6
37	22.5	HPH Trust USD	US26	unch	3846	10.1	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US706	+4	1555	2.8	0.3
6974	1099	JMH USD	US6718	+36	165	2.4	0.7
4078	3155	JSH USD	US3851	+86	190	0.8	0.4
3828	2766	Jardine C&C	3742	-42	246	3.1	1.8
835	567	Keppel Corp	604 cd	+4	3296	5	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1148	-1	2803	3.2	1.2
564	455	SATS	486	+6	2143	3.7	3.4
790	672	SGX	761	-2	1882	3.9	9.5
1184	914	SIA	976	+10	1380	4.1	0.8
292	231	SPH	249	-1	3270	5.2	1.1
376	321	ST Engineering	375	unch	4128	4	5.5
341	243	Sembcorp Ind	255	unch	2417	2	0.7
283	231	Singtel	306	+1	24623	6.7	1.7
57	57.5	ThaiBev	72 xd	-15	48861	0.9	3.5
3037	2380	UOB	2524	-4	1679	4	12
898	591	UOL	658	-8	1633	2.7	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1572	-28	1564	3.8	2
335	297	Wilmar Intl	329	-3	3614	3	1
154	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	145	+2	24899	3.1	1.1

FTSE ST Large & Mid-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD %	P/BV
278	245	Ascendas Reit	275	+1	8869	5.8	1.3
120	105	Ascott Reit	116 xd	unch	3108	6.2	1
74.5	59	Bumitama Agri	68.5	-1	117	1.1	16
178	143	CDL HTrust	162 xd	-5	2913	-	1.1
192	161	CapitaCom Trust	190	+1	6781	4.6	1
380	298	Capitaland	332	-3	5702	3.6	0.7
243	195	CapitaMall Trust	240	+3	12698	4.8	1.2
1359	780	CityDev	916	-5	1725	2	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro	234	-2	8630	4.4	2
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2430	-3	2766	5.9	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US900	+1	313	2.3	-
73.5	59	Far East HTrust	66.5	+0.5	1219	-	0.8
183	150	First Resources	171	-2	230	4	2.2
231	212	Fraser's Cpt Tr	226	unch	1304	5.3	108.7
112	101	Fraser's L&I Tr	108	-1	4884	6.3	1.2
133	85.5	Genting Sing	111	+1	18309	3.2	1.8
37	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	25	-0.5	5376	3.2	0.6
224	167	GuocoLand Ltd	185	+3	98	3.8	0.6
37	23	HPH Trust USD	US26	unch	3846	10.1	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US706	+4	1555	2.8	0.3
6974	1099	JMH USD	US6718	+36	165	2.4	0.7
4078	3155	JSH USD	US3851	+86	190	0.8	0.4
3828	2766	Jardine C&C	3742	-42	246	3.1	1.8
58	44.5	Keppel Infra Tr	50.5	unch	7215	7.4	1.8
835	567	Keppel Corp	604 cd	+4	3296	5	1
124	108	Keppel Reit	121	+2	23416	4.6	0.9
151	151	MH	205 cd	unch	452	5.5	3.6
273	170	Man Oriental USD	US196	+2	71	1.5	1.5
186	152	Mapletree Com Tr	182	+1	6915	5	12
206	184	Mapletree Ind Tr	202	+1	4632	5.8	1.4
140	118	Mapletree Log Tr	139	unch	12195	5.5	12
128	107	Mapletree NAC Tr	126	+1	10968	5.9	1
83	73	NetLink NBN Tr	78	-0.5	1039	-	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1148	-1	2803	3.2	1.2
199	136	OUE	154	+2	192	1.9	0.4
87	64.5	OUE HTrust	71.5 xd	+0.5	1056	-	1
250	157	Olam Intl	187	-3	343	4	1
59	28	Oxley	30	-0.5	325	5	0.9
291	256	ParkwayLife Reit	284	+4	900	4.5	1.5
121	98	Raffles Medical	110	unch	1005	2	2.6
564	455	SATS	486	+6	2143	3.7	3.4
790	672	SGX	761	-2	1882	3.9	9.5
1184	914	SIA	976	+10	1380	4.1	0.8
337	220	SIA Engineering	252	+2	250	5.2	1.9
292	231	SPH	249	-1	3270	5.2	1.1
103	98	SPHREIT	102	unch	483	5.4	1.1
376	321	ST Engineering	375	unch	4128	4	5.5
341	243	Sembcorp Ind	255	unch	2417	2	0.7
273	149	Sembcorp Marine	158	unch	5109	1.3	1.4
58	39	Silverlake Axis	48.5	-1	4124	6.2	7
147	88.5	SingPost	95 cd	-0.5	3080	3.7	1.3
358	283	Singtel	306	+1	24623	6.7	1.7
286	158	StarHub	194	+5	5406	8.2	5.9
74	63.5	StarhillGbl Reit	71 xd	unch	2096	6.4	0.8
199	163	Suntec Reit	192	+3	6955	5.2	0.9
92	57.5	ThaiBev	72 xd	-15	48861	0.9	3.5
10.2	3.7	Thomson Medical	7.8	unch	20270	-	12
3037	2380	UOB	2524	-4	1679	4	2.8
898	591	UOL	658	-8	1633	2.7	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1572	-28	1564	3.8	2
335	297	Wilmar Intl	329	-3	3614	3	1
226	183	Wing Tai	203	unch	458	3.9	0.5
154	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	145	+2	24899	3.1	1.1
182	116	Yanlord Land	133	unch	3491	5.1	0.5

FTSE ST Small-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
145	129	AIMSAMP Cap Reit	140 cd	+2	625	7.4	1
68.5	48	Accordia Golf Tr	55	+0.5	1069	7	0.6
86.5	74	Ascendas-hTrust	84.5	unch	511	-	0.9
119	99	Ascendas-iTrust	113	unch	3566	5.4	1.3
58	12.2	Asian Pay TV Tr	13.3	+0.2	4294	48.9	0.2
64	48	Banyan Tree	59.5	unch	195	1.7	0.8
319	115	Best World	319	+15	5366	1.3	11.4
85.5	76	Boustead	80	+0.5	292	3.8	1.2
126	79.5	BreadTalk	86.5	unch	77	8.1	2.3
632	521	Bukit Sembawang	558	-3	20	3.2	1.1
87	65.5	Cache Log Trust	72	+0.5	2041	8.2	1.1
52	39.5	Centurion	40.5	unch	23	6.2	0.7
166	104	China Aviation	118	+1	1023	3.8	1
46	29.5	China Everbright	36	+0.5	4846	14	0.7
165	90.5	China Sunshine	128	-3	1359	2.3	1.4
103	64	Chip Eng Seng	69.5	-0.5	854	5.8	0.6
53.5	31.5	Cosco	35.5	unch	5128	-	1.5
700	302	Delong	585	unch	3	-	0.6
27.5	17.5	Duty Free Intl	21 cd	+0.5	555	8.8	1.3
77.5	67.5	EC World Reit	73.5	+0.5	144	8.2	0.8
59	47	ESR-REIT	51.5	unch	5250	7.5	1.1
140	92	First Reit	114	+3	799	7.5	1.1
152	135	Fraser's Com Tr	150	-1	4353	6.4	1
80	66.5	Fraser's HTrust	73	-0.5	395	-	1
25.5	16.4	Geo Energy Res	19.6	unch	789	5.1	12
91	70.5	HRnetGroup	77	unch	271	3	2.4
67.5	52	Health Mgt Intl	54	unch	20	0.6	5.2
279	73	Hi-P Intl	92.5	-15	3217	27	1.4
283	252	Hong Leong Fin	265	+1	81	49	0.6
80.5	71	IREIT Global	75.5	+0.5	123	7.9	1.1
37.5	18.3	Indofood Agri	21.5	-1	48	-	0.3
84	43	Japfa	79.5	-2	2523	0.6	1.5
76.5	49	KSH	51.5	unch	105	4.3	0.9
85	53	Kep-KBS Reit USD	66.5	-0.5	312	9.4	0.6
149	128	Keppel DC Reit	144	-1	6878	5.1	1.3
189	132	Keppel T&T	188	unch	472	-	1.2
119	7	KrisEnergy	83	-0.1	7518	-	1
71	44.5	Lian Beng	48	-1	1320	4.7	0.4
41	18	Lippo Malls Tr	25.5	+0.5	3396	13.5	0.9
53	30	MM2 Asia	32.5	unch	1154	-	1.8
95	69.5	ManulifeReit USD	85	-0.5	700	6.5	0.8
120	95	Metro	99.5	-0.5	167	5	0.6
215	5	Noble	81	susp	-	-	-
63.4	45	OUE Com Reit	50 xd	+0.5	2736	7	0.7
66	54	PEC	57	+1	13	3.5	0.6
39.5	17	POSH	18.5	-0.5	75	-	0.5
64.5	44.5	Q&M Dental	49	-1	693	3.3	3.5
110	55.5	QAF Ltd	70.5	-1	67	7.1	0.8
124	96	Riverstone	112	-1	26	2.1	3.7
54.5	22	SIIC Environment	32.5	+0.5	275	-	0.6
45	38	Sabana Reit	41.5	+0.5	261	7.7	0.7
119	90	Sheng Siong	111	-1	553	3	6.1
25.5	3.3	Sino Grandness	5.3	-0.4	2330	-	0.1
69	56	SoilbuildBizReit	60	+0.5	401	8.8	1
129	80.5	Tianjin ZX USD	88.5	+1	424	-	0.7
46.5	32.5	Tuan Sing	38.5 cd	-0.5	851	2.3	0.4
136	54	UMS	66	-0.5	3592	7.6	1.6
112	58.5	Valuetronics	73	+0.5	4380	6.2	167.7
15	8.3	Ying Li Intl	12.3	+0.4	7619	-	0.3
48.5	24	Yoma Strategic	32.5	unch	3867	0.8	0.9
33	16.1	Yongnam	17.6	-	-	-	0.3

Barbie ended 2018 with its highest gross sales in five years, Mattel said on Thursday, highlighting the firm's success in diversifying the traditionally blonde doll by giving it different skin tones, among other updates. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Barbie makeover helps Mattel chalk up surprise Q4 profit

Toymaker's tight lid on costs also contributes to stellar showing

BENGALURU • Mattel posted a surprise fourth-quarter profit as the toymaker benefited from a makeover of its iconic Barbie doll, while keeping a tight lid on costs, sending its shares soaring 19 per cent in extended trading. Barbie ended the year with its highest gross sales in five years, Mattel said on Thursday, highlighting the company's success in diversifying the traditionally blonde doll by giving it different skin tones and dressing it in clothes ranging from hijabs to space suits.

"Barbie has got every career a girl could aspire to and especially in the current environment... female empowerment is huge and that's really helping Barbie do well at retail," said editorial director Jackie Breyer at trade magazine The Toy Book. The Barbie Dreamhouse, which retails for US\$200 (S\$270), was among the top 10 best-selling toys in the United States last year, according to market research firm NPD group. Gross sales rose 12 per cent for Barbie and 9 per cent for Hot Wheels in the fourth quarter, handily beating analysts' estimates for both brands. To tap the renewed popularity of the doll, Mattel has partnered

Warner Bros to make a live-action feature movie on Barbie, starring Oscar-nominated actress Margot Robbie. The company also benefited from its plans to streamline its operations, with costs falling 27 per cent to US\$814.7 million in the quarter. Mattel has been aiming to cut at least US\$650 million in net costs by the year end through job cuts and other measures such as looking at options for its manufacturing facilities. "Restoring profitability for the company this year has been the core focus," chief executive Ynon Kreiz told Reuters, adding that he expects Mattel to exceed its cost-saving target. Mattel reported net income of

US\$14.9 million, or four US cents per share, in the three months ended Dec 31, compared with a loss of US\$281.3 million, or 82 US cents per share, a year earlier, when it took a one-time charge related to changes in US tax laws. Analysts had expected a loss of 16 US cents per share, according to IBES data from Refinitiv. However, gross sales in North America fell 10.1 per cent to US\$744.5 million, reflecting Mattel's struggles with finding a major retailer to make up for lost sales from the shuttering of Toys 'R' Us. Overall, Mattel's net revenue fell 5.4 per cent to US\$1.52 billion, but was still above analysts' estimates of US\$1.44 billion. REUTERS

CompanyBriefs

SIA Engineering

SIA Engineering reported a consecutive weak quarter amid a challenging operating environment, with third-quarter net profit declining to \$33.1 million, down some 40 per cent from a year ago. The decrease was mainly due to a lower share of profits from associated and joint-venture companies, which fell 52.9 per cent year on year to \$19.2 million. The lower share of profits from associated and joint-venture companies was a result of one-time events, including a revision in the fee structure of an engine shop last year, a foreign exchange adjustment for the functional currency change of an associated company, and a tax charge booked by certain associated companies. In addition, revenue for the period dropped by 5.6 per cent to \$255.9 million, mainly because of lower airframe and fleet management revenue, said SIA Engineering. But it noted that the decline was partially mitigated by higher line maintenance revenue. The company's operating profit was down 15.4 per cent year on year to \$15.9 million. Earnings per share came in at 2.95 cents, down from 4.95 cents the year before.

Procurri Corporation

Enterprise hardware supplier Procurri Corporation disclosed yesterday morning that discussions of a possible offer with a second interested buyer have been terminated. It said in a filing to the Singapore Exchange that the second interested buyer would treat the expression of interest – which was unsolicited and non-binding – as "having expired". It added that shareholders are advised to exercise caution when dealing with shares and to refrain from taking any action in respect of their shares that may be prejudicial to their interests. The news comes a day after Procurri's disclosure on Thursday that it had received interest on Monday from the third party for an acquisition through a possible voluntary general offer, subject to due diligence being conducted. Procurri said at the time that the second offeror was not in any way linked to a proposed acquisition via a scheme announced on Sunday by the first offeror, New State Capital Partners, to the best of its knowledge. Procurri had named the first offeror on Monday, adding that it had received a non-binding letter of intent from the United States private investment firm. This was for the proposed acquisition of all company shares, other than treasury shares and shares held by substantial shareholder Irrucorp, via a scheme of arrangement.

Amazon invests in self-driving car start-up Aurora Innovation

SAN FRANCISCO • A self-driving car tech start-up founded by former Google, Tesla and Uber executives said on Thursday it had secured US\$530 million (S\$719 million) in new funding that includes a "significant" investment from Amazon. The funding round for Aurora Innovation led by Silicon Valley venture capital powerhouse Sequoia reportedly valued the start-up – launched just two years ago – at more than US\$2.5 billion. "We are always looking to invest in innovative, customer-obsessed companies, and Aurora is just that," Amazon said in response to an Agence France-Presse inquiry. "Autonomous technology has the potential to help make the jobs of our employees and partners safer and more productive, whether it's in a fulfilment centre or on the road, and we are excited



An Aurora self-driving car. The US start-up is developing technology for autonomous vehicles, but leaving car making to other firms. PHOTO: REUTERS

about the possibilities." Aurora is developing the technology for autonomous vehicles, but leaving the making of cars to other companies. It said in a blog post that it wants to work alongside,

rather than compete with, leading carmakers. The company, which has operations in Silicon Valley and Pittsburgh, plans to use the influx of cash to speed up development of its "Aurora Driver" technology and strengthen its team and network of partnerships. Early last year, it announced its first strategic partnership with Volkswagen Group to bring self-driving cars to market. Major automobile companies along with technology giants such as Google, Tesla and Uber have been investing in self-driving technology, touting the safety benefits and the potential for services that let people summon automated rides on demand. Aurora is led by Mr Chris Urmson, former head of the Google self-driving car initiative. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Interbank currency rates

Currencies	Against US\$ Bid	Against US\$ Offer	Against US\$ Bid Feb 8	Against US\$ Offer Feb 8
US\$/US\$ to one unit of foreign currency:				
Australian dollar	0.9604	0.9607	0.7084	0.7086
Canadian dollar	1.0181	1.0185	0.7512	0.7510
Euro	1.5367	1.5373	1.1335	1.1339
NZ dollar	0.9163	0.9165	0.6759	0.6760
Sterling pound	1.7544	1.7548	1.2941	1.2943
US dollar	1.3557	1.3558	-	-
S\$/US\$ to 100 units of foreign currency:				
Chinese renminbi	20.0934	20.1080	14.8214	14.8311
Danish kroner	20.5905	20.5952	15.1881	15.1904
Hong Kong dollar	17.28	17.28	12.7445	12.7455
Indian Rupee	191	191	14.057	14.059
Indonesian rupiah	0.0097	0.0097	0.0072	0.0072
Japanese yen	12350	12355	0.9110	0.9112
Korean won	0.1208	0.1208	0.0891	0.0891
Malaysian ringgit	33.32	33.36	24.5761	24.6063
New Taiwan dollar	4.3998	4.4015	3.2454	3.2464
Norwegian krone	15.7660	15.7763	11.6294	11.6362
Philippine peso	26.016	26.048	19.190	19.212
Saudi riyal	36.1472	36.1527	26.6631	26.6652
Swedish krona	14.6224	14.6282	10.7859	10.7893
Swiss franc	135.2859	135.3499	99.7904	99.8303
Thai Baht	4.3107	4.3137	3.1797	3.1817

Government securities

Period	Issue code	Coupon rate (%)	Maturity	Close Bid	High	Day's Low
2-Year	NY05100N	3.250%	01-Sep-20	101.97	0.00	0.00
5-Year	NS19100A	2.000%	01-Feb-24	100.00	100.03	100.00
10-Year	NX18100A	2.625%	01-May-28	104.08	104.20	104.07
15-Year	NZ13100V	3.375%	01-Sep-33	112.21	112.30	112.30
20-Year	NI16100X	2.250%	01-Aug-36	97.29	97.35	97.35
30-Year	NA16100H	2.750%	01-Mar-46	103.32	103.30	103.25

Note: Based on latest issue

Source: Monetary Authority of Singapore

MSCI INDICES

Feb 6	Index	In local % dy	curr % yr
World Preliminary	1564.8	-0.1	8.6
EMEA Preliminary	1080.4	0.0	7.2
Europe Preliminary	1513.9	0.0	7.8
Australia	1210.8	0.2	6.1
Austria Preliminary	553.3	1.1	11.1
Belgium Preliminary	1030.0	0.0	12.6
Canada Preliminary	2010.1	0.1	9.8
Denmark Preliminary	7926.3	-0.5	7.0
Finland Preliminary	726.7	1.1	11.3
France Preliminary	1837.6	-0.2	7.2
Germany Preliminary	906.9	-0.3	7.5
Greece Preliminary	45.9	-0.5	5.7
India	1290.0	1.2	2.2
Indonesia	7450.4	1.1	5.3
Ireland Preliminary	196.2	0.8	9.5
Israel Preliminary	256.0	-0.8	11.0
Italy Preliminary	678.5	0.7	9.1
Japan	946.4	0.0	5.9
Korea	663.9	0.0	9.9
Malaysia	584.5	0.0	0.5
Netherlands Preliminary	1615.3	1.1	10.8
New Zealand	137.8	0.0	3.8
Norway Preliminary	2924.9	-0.9	5.0
Pakistan	415.0	-0.9	16.3
Philippines	1368.2	-0.2	8.4
Portugal Preliminary	87.4	0.3	8.3
Singapore	1657.9	0.0	4.0
Singapore Free	356.5	0.0	4.0

Source: MSCI

THE RAFFLES CONVERSATION

RAJEEV SURI
President and CEO of Nokia

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THE BUSINESS TIMES WEEKEND

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Yap Neng Chew, BBM, PPA 叶能超

Age: 93

Passed away peacefully on 7 February 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones

Wife: Lau Wai Chen

Daughter:

Dr Yap Te-Lu

Sons:

Yap Pao Gin
Yap Pao Ming

Granddaughters:

Nicole Chen Yu Jin
Regina Chen Yu Ying
Yap An-Yi
Yap An-Ya

Chauffeur:

Ramli bin Ahmad

Son-in-law:

Dr John Chen Li Tat

Daughters-in-law:

Mok Chuang Yin
Phyllis Ang Poa Yin

Grandsons:

Yap Ti-An
Maximus Yap Ti Keat

Caregivers:

Lorna C. Catriz
Lolita C. Carbonel

All relatives and friends.

Wake is held at Singapore Casket Level 3, Jade Hall,
131 Lavender Street, Singapore 338737.

Cortege leaves on Monday 11 February 2019 at 1.30pm
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 3 for cremation at 2.20pm.

The family requests no wreaths and donations please.



Yap Eng Neo @ Yip Eng Neo

Age: 88

Passed away peacefully on 8 February 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Husband: Ho Kok Leong (deceased)

Sons:

Ho Kong Sin, Christopher
Ho Kong Fatt, Richard
Ho Kong Wai, Raymond
Ho Kong Chuen, Patrick
Ho Kong Chew, William

Daughter:

Ho Lye Heng, Christine

Grandsons:

Ho Jie Han, Ian
Tjioe HongMin, Jeremy
Tjioe HongYun, Wilbur
Tjioe HongFei, Jaryll

Granddaughters:

Ho SiYing
Ho SiMin
Ho Si Rui
Ho Shi Hui, Inez
Ho Si Ying, Adelina

Daughters-in-law:

Lee Me Kun

Tan Teck Jee, Susan
Lee Pui Hoen, Jenny
Seah Siew Choo, Eileen

Son-in-law:

Tjioe Tjong Lip

Granddaughter-in-law:

Ong Wee Ling

Great Grandson:

Tjioe Pin Xian, Lucas

All relatives and friends.

Wake at Singapore Funeral Parlour Level 3, Dahlia Room,
91 Tampines Link, Singapore 528746 from
Saturday 9 February 2019, 2.00pm onwards.

Cortege leaves on Tuesday 12 February 2019 at 12.00pm for
Mandai Crematorium Hall 3 for cremation at 1.00pm.

Obituaries

For enquiries,
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to 6.30pm)

6319-5192

ST Classifieds

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of
my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."
Psalms 23:6



CHIA KIM HIOK

Age: 91 years

Passed away peacefully on 7 February 2019
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones

Beloved Husband: Wong Choong Leng (deceased)

Children:

Wong Yue Sie (deceased)
Yvonne Wong
Wong Yue Shuen

Spouses:

Choy Sok Cheng
Andrew See
Ruth Koh

Grandchildren & Grandson-in-law:

Wong Hui Ying & Aaron Tan, Wong Hui Ling,
Mark See, Samantha See, Kimberly See

and all Relatives and Friends.

Wake at 52 Greenwood Avenue, Singapore 289257
from Friday 8 February - Sunday 10 February 2019
(wake visiting hours: 3pm - 9pm)

Night service on Saturday 9 February at 8pm
Cortege will leave on Sunday 10 February at 4.30pm
for Funeral service at Mandai Crematorium Hall 3 at 6pm

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you." John 14:27



CHAN KOK KEAN

Age: 91

was called home to be with the Lord on
7 February 2019 leaving behind loved ones.

Wife: Oon Lay Kheng

Daughters:

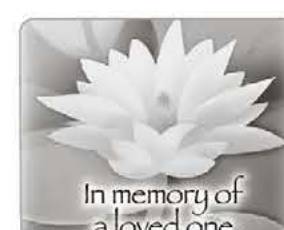
Chan Mui Choo
Chan Mui Pin
Chan Mui Chih
Chan Mui Tuan

Sons-in-law:

Lim Swee Nian
Edward Lau
Paul Tan
Gilles Chaillan

Grandchildren: Celine & Clara Lim, Sean & Brandon Lau,
Rachael & Ryan Tan, Claudia, Marcel & Estelle Chaillan

Wake is held at The Garden of Remembrance,
Hallelujah Parlour, 920 Old Choa Chu Kang Rd,
S699815. Night service will be held on
9 February 2019 at 8pm. Cortege leaves on
10 February 2019 at 2.30pm. Funeral service at
Mandai Crematorium Hall 4 at 3.30pm
thereafter for cremation.



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CITY 'BEST TEAM IN EUROPE'

Sarri says it will be difficult to beat leaders; Guardiola tells team to treat game as 'a final'



WANDERLUST

I didn't know it. What? I'll have to install Instagram on my account. He said he was going to Paris, but Hong Kong is far away. It will definitely not be okay if he is in Hong Kong.



PEP GUARDIOLA, responding to a reporter's query on left-back Benjamin Mendy's Instagram story tagging him in Hong Kong.

LONDON • Maurizio Sarri has dismissed suggestions Chelsea are still in the title race, claiming this season would be a straight "fight between Liverpool and Manchester City".

While City manager Pep Guardiola has refused to rule the Blues out of contention, the Chelsea boss feels his fourth-placed team, who trail the front runners by 12 points, can only aim "for the top four this season, (and) no more".

At his pre-match press conference ahead of their Premier League clash with the league leaders at the Etihad tomorrow, he said: "Guardiola is in the third season in the Premier League. We have to try to reduce the gap.

"At the moment, City are the best team in Europe. We need to defend very well and to be very fast when we recover the ball.

"They are able to press really very well. If we do it, we can find spaces. But it's very difficult."

The Italian added his players were "lucky" to beat City in December when they ended the champions' 21-match unbeaten run with a 2-0 win at Stamford Bridge.

Playing Guardiola's men away remains one of the toughest tasks in English football and Sarri's prepara-



Playing Manchester City away is one of the toughest tasks in English football and Chelsea manager Maurizio Sarri's preparations have not been helped by star winger Eden Hazard's midweek admission that he has made a decision on his future. PHOTO: REUTERS

tions were not helped by Eden Hazard's midweek admission he had made a decision on his future, with his Chelsea contract expiring in June 2020 and amid repeated links with a move to Real Madrid.

Asked about the speculation, which has continued to swirl over a potential move to the European champions, the 60-year-old said he wanted the Belgium forward to be "happy" wherever his future lies.

He added: "I speak every day with Eden, but I speak with Eden about his position on the pitch.

"I will be really very happy with him if he wants to stay because in my opinion, he's the best in Europe.

"But it's up to him. I want to see him happy. And so, he has to decide."

With Liverpool holding a game in hand, Guardiola is well aware any slip-up at home could hand the ini-

tiative back to Jurgen Klopp's men and he urged his players to treat the game like a "final for us".

The 48-year-old told reporters: "We have to play in that way. I have a lot of respect (for Chelsea).

"Everyone must work and create something. When I saw Chelsea in pre-season in (the) Charity Shield, they were already there.

"The season from Chelsea has been exceptional, the Premier

League is there, they (still) have a chance to be champions, a lot of games to play and the (League) cup is there as well.

"I see how they play and recognise what they want to do."

Guardiola also backed Argentina striker Sergio Aguero, who is just one hat-trick behind Alan Shearer's league record of 11 after his treble against Arsenal last weekend, to keep "appearing in the key moments" as "important games belong to big players".

He also revealed captain Vincent Kompany and fellow defender Benjamin Mendy would not be fit for the encounter before expressing his shock that the latter was supposedly in Hong Kong, having tagged himself at the city's airport on his Instagram account.

The Spaniard added: "I didn't know it. What? I'll have to install Instagram on my account.

"He said he was going to Paris, but Hong Kong is far away. It will definitely not be okay if he is in Hong Kong."

The Frenchman yesterday clarified on Twitter it was a joke, tweeting: "It was just joking with my Uber driver. I don't want no problems with Pep." AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE

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FAMILY, FOOTBALL GRIEVING FOR SALA

Police to continue probe into crash but op to recover plane has ended due to poor weather

LONDON • Footballer Emiliano Sala's family were left to grieve yesterday after British authorities formally identified the Argentinian's body as the one recovered from the submerged wreckage of a plane that went down in the English Channel more than two weeks ago.

"We can now begin to mourn our son and our brother," the 28-year-old Cardiff City striker's family said in a statement.

"We would like to thank you for all of your signs of affection and support in the most painful time of our life. To see everyone doing everything possible to join us in the search has been precious help to us."

The Premier League player's former French club, Nantes, said it was withdrawing the jersey with Sala's number 9 on it and all Ligue One and Two matches in France this weekend will be preceded by a minute of applause for him.

The light aircraft was carrying the £15 million (\$\$26.3 million) club-record signing from Nantes to Cardiff when it disappeared near the island of Guernsey, along with 59-year-old pilot David Ibbotson, whose body has not been found.

Sala's disappearance had sparked an outpouring of grief and a flood of cash to support a private hunt for the plane when the official search

A large black and white graphic of a screaming man, likely a protest banner, with people in the foreground holding up a 'BRIGADE NOIR' scarf.

was initially called off on Jan 24.

Sala's body was first spotted by British rescuers using a remotely operated underwater vehicle on Sunday, close to where the plane vanished from radar on Jan. 21.

Investigators recovered the body on Wednesday but said they were abandoning plans to lift the plane wreck out of the water because of bad weather. However, British police said that an investigation into the circumstances of his death was continuing.

"I am very sorry about this sad news. Many of us kept a glimmer of hope for you, Emiliano," Argentina legend Diego Maradona said on Instagram. "What sadness, this is the worst news. Rest in peace warrior,"

tweeted retired Argentinian football star Gabriel Batistuta.

Argentina President Mauricio Macri also offered his condolences to Sala's family, saying: "We are with you."

There was also an outpouring of grief from fellow players. Manchester City's Ilkay Gundogan and Kylian Mbappe of Paris Saint-Germain had been among the 4,829 people who contributed to a crowdfunding campaign which paved the way for the private search.

Gundogan tweeted “may he rest in peace”, while Mbappe simply tweeted “RIP Emi”. Arsenal midfielder Mesut Ozil tweeted there were “no words to describe how sad this is”.

Sala's sister Romina, who confirmed her family would be adopting Nala, the player's beloved dog, took to Instagram, posting a moving tribute to her brother.

She wrote in Spanish: "Your soul in my soul will shine forever, thus illuminating the time of my existence. I love you."

Cardiff manager Neil Warnock yesterday said that he believed Salako would have thrived in the Premier League, saying: "He was a type of player that would score 10 or 15 for me at the top level every year. But, not just that, he would work hard as a team player."

“He was at the prime, I felt, and he knew he had things to prove.”
AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

Nantes supporters displaying a banner in tribute to Emiliano Sala ahead of a French Ligue One match at the club's stadium last month. After his body was identified, there was also an outpouring of grief from fellow footballers, many of whom paid tribute to the Argentinian on social media. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

GOODBYE, BROTHER

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will shine forever,
thus illuminating the
time of my existence.
I love you.**



ROMINA SALA, Emiliano Sala's sister, in a moving tribute to her brother posted on Instagram.

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BigMatch

RELIANCE ON WIZARD CAN BE BLUES' HAZARD

Higuain and supporting cast must step up to match free-scoring City's match-winners

Richard Jolly

The top scorers versus the best attacking player? One is fact, the other opinion. But Eden Hazard has figured in

the top two of the voting for Professional Footballers' Association Player of the Year in three of the last five full seasons. Now, he is the sole footballer in double figures for both goals and assists in the Premier League.

And yet, his Chelsea are 12 points behind Manchester City. Pep Guardiola was a devotee of Johan Cruyff, the master of Total Football. His collectivist principles are reflected in the way his side have shared the goals around. Chelsea, meanwhile, have been too reliant on wing wizard Hazard. This could be seen as the team against the individual, much as that would irritate Maurizio Sarri, who

thinks his system is more important than any player. One interpretation of his signing of Gonzalo Higuain is that it is a classic Chelsea move: bolting on another superstar. Another is that, given the Argentinian's prolific return for Sarri's Napoli, he should suit the shape. And the third is that he can liberate Hazard, who was pressed into service as the striker amid Alvaro

Morata's unhappiness, before his eventual exit to Atletico Madrid, and Sarri's distrust of Olivier Giroud. Yet part of the problem is that Sarri deployed Hazard less as a false nine, in the way Guardiola used Lionel Messi in a deeper starting position, but as a genuine No. 9, stranded upfield. It is a role for the bulkier Higuain, not a flair player. City were interested in Hazard in both 2012 and 2018. They have flourished without him. Hazard has the most Premier League assists, but Raheem Sterling and Leroy Sane are tied in second. Six players, including all of their five forwards, have at least nine goals in all competitions (to Chelsea's two). City even outscore Chelsea in the centre of midfield, where David Silva, Bernardo Silva, Ilkay Gundogan and Kevin de Bruyne have a combined 24 goals. While Hazard leads the division in dribbles and key passes, City are far more creative as a team than

Chelsea are. They average 1.4 more shots on target per game. They have twice as many inside the six-yard box, rendering goals almost automatic. They specialise in creating the sort of opportunities that gave Sergio Aguero three close-range finishes against Arsenal last week. It helps that their wingers, Sane and Sterling in particular, head for the byeline to deliver low crosses; Hazard, for all his other attributes, does that less. City may seem the kind of slick unit Sarri wants to create, benefiting from greater understanding and more time under the manager. Yet, it can also feel like an indictment of Morata, Giroud, Willian and Pedro. The champions' various attackers have been far superior to Hazard's supporting cast.

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Key battles

Kyle Walker v Eden Hazard

Hazard's league season has already produced 12 goals and 10 assists. He was outstanding against Huddersfield last week after being restored to the left flank. This may be a game where Walker has to play as he did against Arsenal on Sunday and for England at the World Cup, in effect as a third centre-back, rather than overlapping.



Sergio Aguero v David Luiz

Aguero was sent off in this fixture two years ago for a disgraceful lunge at Luiz. He ought to be in a better mood tomorrow after a hat-trick last week. He has 40 goals against the big six since joining City, a total no one else can rival. Yet while Luiz can be erratic, he was outstanding in December's win over City, defending well and scoring once.



Nicolas Otamendi v Gonzalo Higuain

Otamendi has spent much of the season understudying John Stones and Aymeric Laporte but, after facing Arsenal and Everton, he could be used to scrap with his fellow Argentinian. Higuain's brace against Huddersfield opened his Chelsea account during his loan move and took his tally to 38 goals in 37 league games under Maurizio Sarri.



Key statistics



TEXT: RICHARD JOLLY PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Rivalry with Rashford helping United: Lingard

LONDON • Jesse Lingard believes his good-natured competition with teammate Marcus Rashford, including goal and assist targets for each player, has helped bring the best out of them and drive Manchester United's bid to climb into the Premier League's top four. Lingard and Rashford were reported to have feared their careers could stall due to Jose Mourinho's volatile temperament. But, freed from their previous manager's shackles since Ole Gunnar Solskjaer took over as interim boss, the England internationals have been in fine form. With nine goals between them

since the Norwegian arrived, the good friends have given United's attack a more menacing look in recent weeks. Rashford got the first goal of the Solskjaer reign, against Cardiff, and Lingard struck twice in that 5-1 rout. Having netted the winner in United's 1-0 victory at Leicester last weekend, Rashford has now scored in six of his side's eight league games under Solskjaer. "Marcus and me have been setting targets for each other to challenge ourselves," Lingard said. "Obviously it's different aims, maybe in certain games it's how many shots, or this many touches in a game.

"It's just different random things, just to make you think and it's to kind of push each other because you want your friend to be successful as well. I'm not going to go into the amount of numbers involved because then everyone will know." Solskjaer has earned praise for inspiring his side's 10-match unbeaten run since replacing the sacked Mourinho in December. With seven victories in eight league games, fifth-placed United have surged back into the race to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top-four finish. United sit just two points behind Chelsea and can end this weekend

in fourth place if they beat struggling Fulham at Craven Cottage today and Maurizio Sarri's team lose at Manchester City tomorrow. The Red Devils also host Paris Saint-Germain in the first leg of the Champions League round of 16 on Tuesday and face Chelsea in the FA Cup fifth round later this month. If Solskjaer can lead United to silverware and finish in the top four, it might be hard for the Glazer family and executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward to ignore his credentials for the manager's post on a permanent basis. Fulham manager Claudio Ranieri feels the former United striker has

already proved he deserves the job. "At the moment, he deserves it. He's shown all the players are with him. Manchester United's mentality has changed. Why not?" said Ranieri, whose side are second bottom after one win in their past five league games. Another player who has flourished under Solskjaer's watch is Phil Jones. United rewarded the defender with a new deal that will keep him at Old Trafford until 2023. AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

FULHAM V MAN UNITED
Singtel TV Ch102 & StarHub Ch227, 8.30pm

FRIENDLY COMPETITION

It's just different random things, just to make you think and it's to kind of push each other because you want your friend to be successful as well.



JESSE LINGARD, Manchester United forward, on him and teammate Marcus Rashford setting various targets for each other.

PRESSURE IS THE SAME: ALISSON

Goalkeeper insists nerves not affecting Liverpool in title run-in after recent slip-ups

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE										
TODAY										
Fulham v Man United										
Ch102 & Ch227 8.30pm										
Liverpool v Bournemouth										
Ch102 & Ch227, 11pm										
Huddersfield v Arsenal										
Ch103 & Ch 228, 11pm										
Southampton v Cardiff										
Ch104 & Ch229, 11pm										
Watford v Everton										
Ch105 & Ch230, 11pm										
Crystal Palace v West Ham										
Ch106 & Ch231, 11pm										
Brighton v Burnley										
Ch102 & Ch227, tomorrow, 1.30am										
TOMORROW										
Tottenham v Leicester										
Ch102 & Ch227, 9.30pm										
Man City v Chelsea										
Ch102 & Ch227, 11.55pm										
MONDAY										
Wolves v Newcastle										
Ch102 & Ch227, Tuesday, 4am										
All on Singtel TV & StarHub										
STANDINGS										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts			
1 Man City	26	20	2	4	68	20	62			
2 Liverpool	25	19	5	1	56	15	62			
3 Tottenham	25	19	0	6	51	24	57			
4 Chelsea	25	15	5	5	45	23	50			
5 Man United	25	14	6	5	49	35	48			
6 Arsenal	25	14	5	6	51	36	47			
7 Wolverhampton	25	11	5	9	33	32	38			
8 Watford	25	9	7	9	33	34	34			
9 Everton	26	9	6	11	36	38	33			
10 Bournemouth	25	10	3	12	37	44	33			
11 Leicester City	25	9	5	11	30	31	32			
12 West Ham	25	9	5	11	31	38	32			
13 Brighton	25	7	6	12	27	36	27			
14 Crystal Palace	25	7	5	13	26	33	26			
15 Newcastle	25	6	6	13	21	33	24			
16 Southampton	25	5	9	11	27	42	24			
17 Burnley	25	6	6	13	26	46	24			
18 Cardiff	25	6	4	15	22	46	22			
19 Fulham	25	4	5	16	25	55	17			
20 Huddersfield	25	2	5	18	13	46	11			

LONDON • Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson Becker has conceded five goals in his last three Premier League matches after letting in five in the 12 before that.

A case of nerves creeping in, perhaps?

No way, insists the Brazilian, who is adamant that his side's confidence has not taken a dent despite the Reds being knocked off top spot for the first time in two months.

Frustrating 1-1 draws in their last two league games against Leicester City and West Ham have allowed defending champions Manchester City to leapfrog them after their 2-0 win over Everton on Wednesday, although Pep Guardiola's side have played an extra game.

"We believe we can win the league," Alisson told Sky Sports ahead of today's home game against Bournemouth. "We've shown in the past that we're good enough and we'll continue to show this in the games we've got to come.

"Our pressure is the same. We take things game by game without worrying about what our opponents are doing. Everyone wants to win this league but, at Liverpool, our concern is winning games and not dropping points.

"We don't think about Man City, we think about ourselves. We only think about what we can do and how things are moving forward.

"To get back to the top of the league, we need to win games. That comes from hard work, starting on Saturday."

Part of Jurgen Klopp's hard work is to find a way of harnessing the desperation to end a title drought of nearly three decades positively, rather than letting the nerves of what promises to be a thrilling run-in become a hindrance.

Tension is already apparent in the stands as much as on the pitch, after the unexpected slip-ups of the past week.

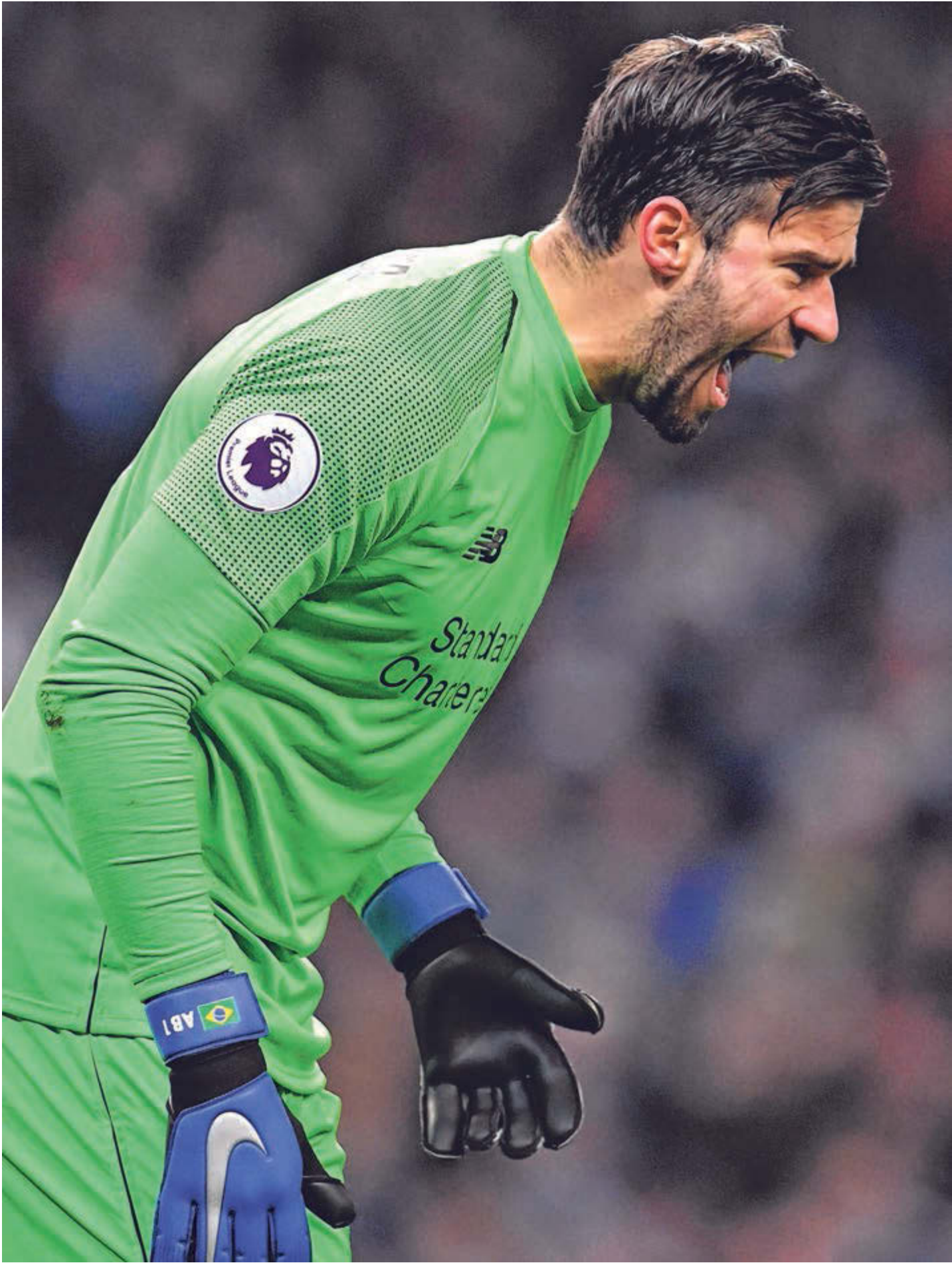
"You get that feeling as well from the crowd and it's not really necessary at the moment," said defender Virgil van Dijk. "Obviously everyone wants to win so bad and that's what we want as well but sometimes you need to be very patient."

Klopp also admitted after being held at West Ham on Monday that his side need to "enjoy" the ride rather than fearing the consequences of missing out.

"It's not about pressure, it's about enjoying the situation you are in," he said. "We have 62 points, have lost one game in the whole season so far, which is very positive."

Another positive sign is that his injury worries have eased, with Trent Alexander-Arnold, Georginio Wijnaldum and Jordan Henderson returning to training on Thursday.

Defenders Dejan Lovren and Joe



Reds goalkeeper Alisson Becker has conceded five goals in his last three Premier League games, having let in just five in the 12 matches before that. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Gomez, and midfielder Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, remain sidelined.

Meanwhile, Liverpool yesterday announced a world-record profit of £106 million (\$S186 million).

In their yearly financial results, they made an annual pre-tax profit of £125 million – up from £40 million – as turnover increased in the 12 months to May 2018 by £90 mil-

1
Liverpool have lost just once to Bournemouth in 14 meetings (10 wins, three draws).

lion to £455 million, also a record.

They were boosted by a run to the Champions League final last season, which earned an estimated £72 million, and were helped by midfielder Philippe Coutinho's £142 million transfer to Barcelona in January 2018.

Leicester City had held the record for net (post-tax) profit of £80 million in 2016-17 (£92 million pre-

tax) after reaching the Champions League quarter-finals in 2017.

In revenue terms, Liverpool will leapfrog Arsenal into third place in the Premier League, behind Manchester United and City.

REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LIVERPOOL V BOURNEMOUTH
Singtel TV Ch102 & StarHub Ch227, 11pm

Gunners must do better away: Emery

LONDON • Unai Emery believes Arsenal's major problem on their travels has been inside the minds of his players.

The Gunners have failed to win outside the Emirates Stadium since Nov 25 – losing four and drawing two of their past six Premier League away games to slip to sixth in the table – and he knows the rot has to stop at Huddersfield today.

The Spaniard did not quite accuse his players of complacency, but he did admit that they look better when they "prepare the matches by thinking it's going to be very difficult".

Despite Huddersfield being bottom of the league, having taken

only one point from an available 36, Emery expects the Terriers – now under the management of German Jan Siewert – to press high rather than defend deep.

"We can have better balance (in performances) when we prepare by thinking it's going to be very difficult," Emery said.

"I spoke with the players that we need to think this match is very important for us.

"Every player needs to be ready, be focused and be thinking we need to win this match.

"We must impose ourselves from the first minute and throughout the 90 minutes, but first is the mentality.

"We know that defensively we need to do better. We have to continue in our way with passion and also stay calm."

Emery is adamant that the recent criticism of his stewardship had not affected him.

"My first critic is always myself," he said. "I work over the criticism of me because I know that work in the present can change our way.

"We have the possibility and the opportunity to get into the top four, but we know it's not easy.

"One month ago, we were in the same situation. We are strong at home, but we need to do better away."

Emery is hoping January loan

signing Denis Suarez can make a bigger impact, following a poor debut in the 3-1 loss to his former club Manchester City last week.

"This week, he worked Monday alone here with our coaches and he's working with a different adaptation, better than last week," said Emery.

"I hope he's continuing to improve every day. Then he can show in the next matches how he can help us, better than in the first match against Manchester City."

THE GUARDIAN, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

HUDDERSFIELD V ARSENAL

Singtel TV Ch103 & StarHub Ch 228, 11pm

Courtois, Morata swap Madrids for derby

MADRID • Thibaut Courtois left Chelsea on bad terms last summer and he expects to feel the same anger from Atletico Madrid fans when he lines up for Real Madrid in LaLiga today.

Courtois developed into one of the world's top goalkeepers after three years on loan at Atletico, but this will be his first appearance at the Wanda Metropolitano in the colours of their bitter rivals.

The Belgium goalkeeper will also be involved in another subplot, as his former Chelsea teammate Alvaro Morata is expected to make his home debut against the club where he came up through the academy and spent five seasons at.

The Spain striker may be charged

with leading Atletico's line in what could prove a pivotal cross-town derby this weekend.

Real arrive on the back of four LaLiga wins on the bounce and will leapfrog their opponents with a win, while a victory for Atletico could jump-start their faltering title challenge, having fallen six points adrift of leaders Barcelona.

For Courtois, a reunion with Diego Simeone's men is not new – he faced them twice for Chelsea in the Champions League last season and again at the Santiago Bernabeu in September – but the 26-year-old is expecting a far more hostile reception this time round.

He said: "It happens in football, it's a derby and a derby here in

Madrid is always heated.

"They'll whistle and shout, everything you would expect, it's part of football. I will always respect them. Now I'm playing for the other side."

However, Courtois, who won multiple honours with Atletico including the 2013-14 LaLiga title, offered an olive branch to Atletico fans, who earlier in the term vandalised his stadium plaque.

He added: "It is still a special match. I respect the fans and the club a lot, in the end, they gave me the opportunity to play when I was just 19 years old."

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

ATLETICO V REAL MADRID

StarHub Ch213, 11.10pm

SPORTS FIXTURES HIGHLIGHTS				
Event	Home	Away	Timing	Venue
Sat, 9 Feb 2019				
A League	Western Sydney	Central Coast	2.35pm	LW
A League	Melbourne City	Adelaide	4.50pm	LW
Spanish League	Getafe	Celta de Vigo	8.00pm	LW / SB
English Premier	Fulham	Manchester Utd	8.30pm	LW / SB
German League	Dortmund	Hoffenheim	10.30pm	LW / SB
German League	RB Leipzig	E Frankfurt	10.30pm	LW / SB
English Premier	Southampton	Cardiff	11.00pm	LW / SB
English Premier	Liverpool	Bournemouth	11.00pm	LW / SB
English Premier	Huddersfield	Arsenal	11.00pm	LW / SB
Spanish League	Atletico Madrid	Real Madrid	11.15pm	LW / SB
Sun, 10 Feb 2019				
Italian League	Fiorentina	Napoli	1.00am	LW / SB
English Premier	Brighton	Burnley	1.30am	LW / SB
English League Champ	Stoke City	West Bromwich	1.30am	LW / SB
German League	Bayern Munich	Schalke 04	1.30am	LW / SB
Spanish League	Espanyol	Vallecano	1.30am	LW / SB
Dutch League	Heracles	Aljax	1.30am	LW / SB
Italian League	Parma	Inter	3.30am	LW
Spanish League	Girona	Huesca	3.45am	LW
Dutch League	Feyenoord	De Graafschap	3.45am	LW
Visit singaporepools.com for the latest 'Live' telecast listing.				
LOTTERY				
TOTO Thu, 7 Feb 2019 Draw No. 3447/2019				
Group 1 Prize: \$1,547,890 * 2 Winning Shares				
Sold at: 1. Singapore Pools Branch, Blk 481 Tampines Street 44 #01-277 (One System 7 Entry) 2. Seah Koon Huat, Blk 116 Bukit Merah View #01-233 (One Ordinary Entry)				
Draw No. 3448/2019 Next Draw Mon, 11 Feb 2019 Group 1 Prize \$1,000,000 est. 6.30pm Draw Venue: Singapore Pools (Private) Limited, 210 Middle Road, #01-01, Singapore 188994				
No person under the age of 18 years shall be allowed to purchase a ticket or to claim any prize. LW: LiveWire (MBS) & LiveWire (RWS) (21 years and above) LW: LiveWire (Singapore Pools) (21 years and above during 'Live' telecast) SB: SportsBuzz@Kong (21 years and above) Singapore Pools Account Service. Call 6796 6688 for more details.				
PLAY RESPONSIBLY Stay Legal. National Problem Gambling Helpline: 1800-6-888-888 Singapore Pools Account Service. Call 6796 6688 for more details. RCB Reg No.: 196020203				

YOUNGEST LOCAL SPL COACH, 33, UNFAZED

Khidhir relishes building on the good work of his predecessor Kraljevic at Balestier Khalsa

New Balestier Khalsa coach Khidhir Khamis was selected from eight candidates, half of them foreigners, who applied for the post. He is the youngest head coach in 24 years of professional club football in Singapore.
ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE

Sazali Abdul Aziz

He earned the necessary certification to lead a professional local club six years ago. But the opportunity never came for Khidhir Khamis, until now.

The 33-year-old will take the reins of Balestier Khalsa for the upcoming Singapore Premier League (SPL) season, after Tigers coach Marko Kraljevic left two weeks ago to coach Malaysia Premier League side Kelantan.

This makes him the youngest Singaporean head coach appointment in the 24 years of the SPL and its predecessor, the S-League which started in 1996.

Five-time champions Tampines Rovers had announced in December that they intended to appoint Gavin Lee, 28, as head coach once he gains his 'A' licence, which he will attempt to earn this year. Until then, he cannot hold the title.

The youngest local before Khidhir was Shasi Kumar, who was a year older when he led Woodlands Wellington in 2010.

Khidhir, who previously coached age-group teams at Tanjong Pagar United and Geylang International – where he also had a stint as head of their youth programme – until 2013, is relishing the opportunity to return to elite football coaching.

He had applied for several posts but “the doors just did not open”, said the Victoria School alumnus, who had been coaching at schools and private academies.

He is now relishing starting on “something new and exciting” with Balestier.

Khidhir received his Asian Football Confederation 'A' Licence – which is mandatory for locals to take charge of SPL clubs – in 2013 at the age of 27. At the time, he was said to be the youngest Asean coach to hold the standard.

Balestier chairman S. Thavaneson said that eight candidates had applied for the role, half of whom were foreigners. But he had no qualms picking a local rookie to replace Kraljevic, who had been the Tigers' coach since 2014, and led the club to a first Singapore Cup that year before being named the S-League's Coach of the Year.

“Our local coaches, I think, have over the years stepped up and been able to hold their own in the SPL,” said Thavaneson, who is also one of four vice-presidents in the Football Association of Singapore.

“I think more young local coaches will make the grade, provided they are given that opportunity.

“We, the management of local clubs, must have that... trust in local coaches and help them develop. Because helping them develop helps

develop Singapore football too.”

Khidhir knows his age will raise eyebrows. After all, he is only a year older than Balestier's oldest player, goalkeeper and captain Zaiful Nizam.

“It's about how you manage the players,” said Khidhir, with a cool smile. “I've made it clear that... (they should) not cross the line between player and coach, even though we are about the same age.

“And I think they are professional enough to manage and handle themselves in that sense.”

Khidhir, who visited the famed French training centre Clairefontaine at his own expense in 2013, plans to leverage on technology for a “more visual” approach to transferring knowledge to players. He is also exploring the feasibility of filming training sessions.

With “nothing to lose” in his first major coaching stint, he is keen to build on the work Kraljevic had done – Balestier finished sixth in the nine-team SPL last season – and try get the Tigers playing a more expansive game, although he was not ready to make any predictions yet.

Borrowing Nelson Mandela's famous quote, Khidhir said: “As far as I see it, we'll go into matches and we're either going to win, or learn.”

msazali@sph.com.sg

RESPECT IS KEY

It's about how you manage the players. I've made it clear that... (they should) not cross the line between player and coach, even though we are about the same age.



KHIDHIR KHAMIS, Balestier Khalsa's 33-year-old coach, on the small age “gap” between him and his players.



InGoodConscience

Nagging suspicion of instant justice in return for continuity



Rob Hughes

The speed with which Australia's leading horse trainer was tried and banned by a quasi-judicial panel of stewards this week cuts two ways.

It is heartening that racing took less than a week to clean up the manure of cheating and cruelty from its own yard. Darren Weir will have no further use of the electric shock “jiggers” that police found in his stables in Victoria.

But justice served so swift, behind closed doors and with the trainer apparently compliant in his four-year ban, smacked of a quick deal.

Within a day of the judgment being pronounced, Weir had sold his Ballarat stable to a former rival who was himself barred in 2017 for “conduct prejudicial to the image of horse racing”.

And the real cops, Victoria's state police, have yet to close their file on the investigation into animal cruelty and corruption of betting at the Weir establishment. In the real world, justice moves to more

exactng standards, and has to be seen to be as fair or as foul as it really is.

In racing circles, it is hard to find people without vested interests.

Two of the four members of the panel who decided Weir's fate on Monday had to declare that they once had financial interests in horses trained by the defendant.

Indeed, Judge John Bowman, who delivered the verdict, said he divested himself of ownership when he took up his position on the Racing Appeals and Disciplinary Board.

“You are a 48-year-old man who has completed a rags-to-riches rise in the racing world,” the judge told Weir. “Until a week ago, you could be described as a leviathan trainer... with hundreds of horses, owners that number in the thousands, with a staff of 150.

“You rose from the depths of the Mallee (a district in the state of Victoria) to be Australia's leading trainer. Now you will be remembered for possessing instruments of cruelty and implements associated with a high level of cheating.”

With no public or media permitted at the 11-hour hearing, Patrick Wheelahan, the trainer's counsel, said that his client wanted a quick resolution and did not want the matter to drag on, costing millions to racing. He did not

contest the charges in the knowledge that the stewards would seek his four-year disqualification.

Time, as they say, is money. Before the police raid on his two major stables, Weir had more than 600 horses in training. In less than a week, that number was down to 431. Owners were running for cleaner pastures.

Weir's reputation as Australia's “go-to” man, famously saddling the 100-1 outsider Prince of Penzance to win the 2015 Melbourne Cup, was running out faster than a bolting stallion.

His riches were in danger of turning back to rags. The racing authority was spurred by the police

The speedy resolution saw the judgment made public on Wednesday. By Thursday, the biggest of his stables was sold to trainers Ciaran Maher and David Eustace.

raid to take prompt action because every day risked diluting millions of dollars from the betting industry, the thoroughbred breeding industry, and stud fees that dwindle where suspicion festers that Weir's Grade 1 winners were less than the sum of their genes.

The speedy resolution saw the judgment made public on Wednesday. By Thursday, the biggest of his stables was sold to trainers Ciaran Maher and David Eustace.

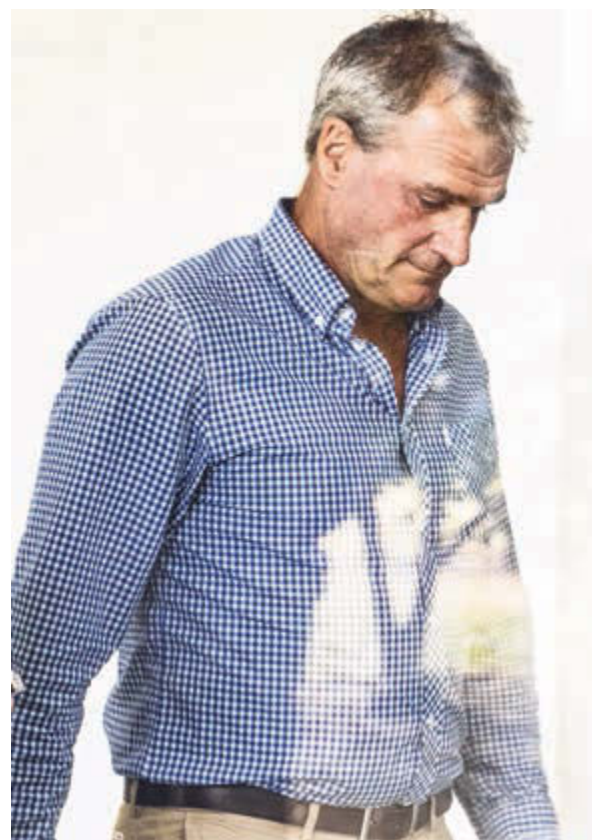
Maher, 36, a former jockey at Weir's other Warrnambool stable, served a six-month suspension and paid a A\$75,000 (S\$72,000) fine for training horses owned by a convicted conman in September 2017.

“I've known ‘Weiry’ a long time,” Maher said. “We've quite often had a yarn about training and different methods and stuff like that.

“Obviously it's very sad for him but, on the other hand, it's a great opportunity for us.”

Asked if he plans to acquire Weir's second stable Warrnambool, he replied: “When Ballarat kicks off and we get a good handle on it, Warrnambool's definitely an option. Obviously that system works given Darren's success.”

The takeover was welcomed by Racing Victoria as securing the employment of stable staff. The caveat to Racing Victoria's



acceptance was: “The stewards have advised all parties that they will continue to closely monitor both the requirements of the transfer and the adherence of Mr Weir to the terms of his disqualification.”

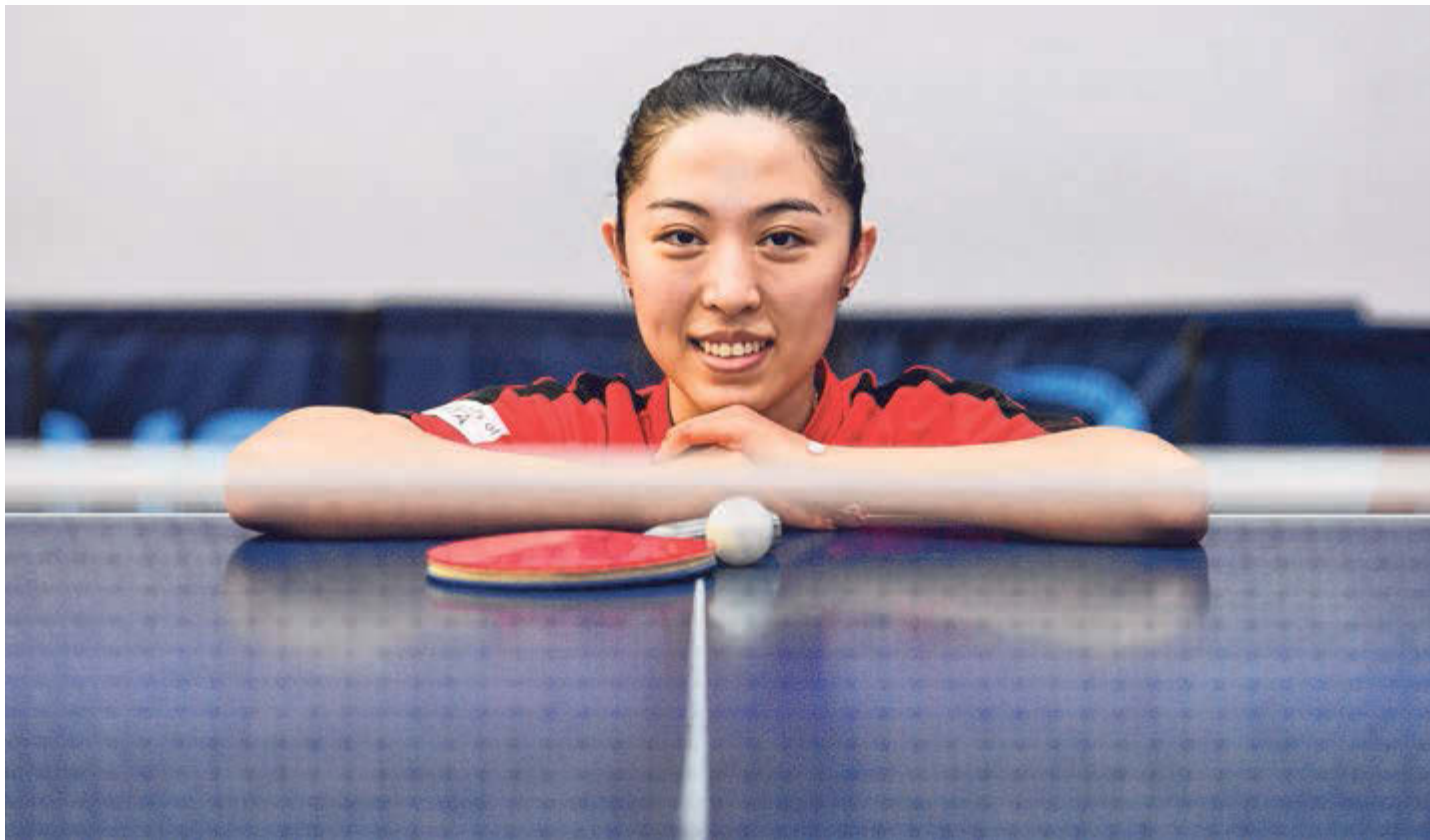
Those terms forbid any involvement in horse racing. The stewards are trying to bolt the door on a man reduced from leviathan (monster) trainer to outcast.

stsports@sph.com.sg

Darren Weir at Victorian Racing Club's headquarters in Flemington on Wednesday. The disgraced 48-year-old trainer was banned for four years over the possession of devices used to give electric shocks to his horses. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

THE STRAITS TIMES ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

PRESENTED BY 100 PLUS



Yu Mengyu's goal is to win a medal at next year's Tokyo Olympics, having lost in the singles quarter-finals at Rio 2016.
ST PHOTO: SAHIBA CHAWDHARY

She said: "When I returned to the table, they had changed the balls and ranking system, and it felt as though table tennis had moved on and left me behind."

But her love for the sport and determination carried her through those depressing times and the 29-year-old's perseverance was rewarded at last year's Asian Games.

Her joint bronze medal behind two Chinese, Chen Meng and Wang Manyu, was a surprise – considering Yu was viewed as more of a doubles and team player who was perennially in the shadows of compatriot Feng Tianwei.

Yu, seeded 14th, upset sixth seed Doo Hoi Kem, a Hong Kong player she had not beaten in three previous meetings, in the round of 16.

She then shocked Taiwanese third seed Cheng I-ching in the quarter-finals to secure a medal and took a game off Wang before losing the semi-final.

The way she fended off personal demons to come back from potentially career-ending injuries earned her a nomination for The Straits Times Athlete of the Year award.

"After a few months out, I used a year to play international tournaments and the results were not ideal and I was really depressed," said Yu, who preferred drawing to ping pong as a child. "I couldn't even see the ball as it whizzed past me."

"But it could be that I have matured with age or it could be the surgery that made me appreciate every minute of competition. So I'm playing with more joy and calmness."

"The 2018 Asian Games was the first and last Asian Games that I would play."

"So I told myself before playing tough opponents or those whom I have a very low win rate against that I want to outdo myself and not have any regrets. And I did it."

Singapore women's head coach Hao Anlin hailed Yu's ability to upset the odds in a world full of emerging talents who have raised the

BATTLING THROUGH

I couldn't even get out of bed for a month in 2014 because of the back injury. I felt like giving up, but I really wanted to play in the Olympics at least once, so I hung on.



YU MENGYU, on what she had to endure.

pace and energy levels of the sport.

He said: "Despite never being 100 per cent fit – we can only manage the injuries and not fully cure them – it is admirable and inspirational how Mengyu has been able to achieve a breakthrough in terms of technique and mentality and compete with other world-class players. "The competition is only going to be tougher, but we hope her spirit and experience can help her continue to be a key player for Singapore at least until the next Olympics."

Despite admitting to being more introverted than imposing, Yu was sure what would make a fairy-tale ending to her roller-coaster career.

The world No. 40 said: "I still don't have an Olympic medal, and that's my goal for now."

davidlee@sph.com.sg

SCAN TO WATCH
ST Athlete of the Year nominee, Yu Mengyu:
str.sg/yumengyu



Nominee #4: Yu Mengyu (table tennis)

She beats pain for her best year

Paddler plays with joy and calmness to win Asiad singles bronze

David Lee

The crowning moment of her singles career was not even supposed to happen last year.

Twice, in 2014 and 2016, Singapore paddler Yu Mengyu thought about throwing in the towel after suffering debilitating spinal and shoulder injuries respectively.

She told The Straits Times: "I couldn't even get out of bed for a month in 2014 because of the back injury. I felt like giving up, but I really wanted to play in the Olympics at least once, so I hung on."

She made it through Rio 2016 with injections and PRP (platelet-rich plasma) treatment and finally went for shoulder injury on a labrum that had been completely torn for more than a year.

100 PLUS ACTIVE

Yu Mengyu
Table tennis

OUT DO YOUR SELF

Winners know every victory is hard won.
You take it one match at a time.
Fast and furious. But you control the tempo.
Mastering every strike with knife-edge precision.



SWINGING KOREAN GOLFER IN LIMELIGHT

Choi has fun with partners on PGA debut and recovers from poor front nine for one-over 72

LOS ANGELES • As they waited to tee off from the third tee box on Thursday, golfer Jerry Kelly and National Football League star Aaron Rodgers took a look inside the bag of playing partner Choi Ho-sung.

The two, who had lobbied on Twitter to partner the South Korean, had taken an interest in his head covers, which are imprinted with the logos of his famous swing.

Seizing the moment, Choi quickly grabbed a head cover off a club and placed it on his hand.

Then, he patted the two on their backs with the makeshift mitten, drawing huge laughs from the gallery behind them.

Despite playing with high-profile American golfers and celebrities, it was Choi who stole the show in the first round of the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am at Pebble Beach, California, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary.

The Japan Golf Tour star, in the field this week on a sponsor's exemption after his "fisherman swing" went viral, shot a one-over 72 on his PGA Tour debut.

He drew both awe and laughs. He began the day by placing rabbit ears over his playing partners' heads as they posed for photographs, then followed it up with a near hole-out from the trees that helped him save par.

"I tried not to be, but I was nervous over the first few holes," said Choi, who played at the SMBC Singapore Open last month and was joint-12th at the Sentosa Golf Club.

"But I was lacking a little bit on my approach putts. Other than that, it was a great experience... I had so much fun today."

"I felt like I was really lucky on the first hole but I was disappointed with some of the bogeys I made on the front. So I tried to stay focused on the back."

At Monterey Peninsula, he found

SLICK SURPRISE

The biggest difference was on the greens. I just couldn't get used to it and it was very fast, so that was the most difficult part for me.



CHOI HO-SUNG, a veteran on the Japan and Korean Tours, on the challenges during his opening round at Pebble Beach.

himself four over through his first 10 holes.

He settled down with birdies on three of the next six holes, with his first of the day coming on the par-three 11th. It drew a huge fist pump and a roar from the crowd that made him "feel the love".

But the 45-year-old missed out on further birdies as he struggled to adjust to the speed of the greens.

His par putt on the par-four seventh hole lipped out, and a near-birdie on No. 8 barely slipped by.

"I've had a lot of experiences on courses on the Korean and Japan Tours, but I felt like the biggest difference was on the greens," said the world No. 194, who played at Spyglass Hill yesterday and will head to Pebble Beach for the third round before the cut.

"I just couldn't get used to it and it was very fast, so that was the most difficult part for me."

But he managed to coax one last birdie in from the fringe on No. 16



Choi Ho-sung with his trademark "fisherman swing" at the second tee in the first round of the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am on Thursday. The Korean was the centre of attention despite playing with leading American golfers and celebrities and is tied for 11th, eight shots behind the joint leaders. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

to be in a tie for 11th, leaving Kelly impressed with his "pretty darn good fundamentals at impact".

The 1,262nd-ranked American said: "The guy can play. It's a great thing to give him a spot but it's not a charity thing. He can play."

"He can shift it and roll it. There's

no reason that he can't compete."

Brian Gay and Scott Langley shared the lead at seven-under 64, with six players, including South Korea's Kim Si-woo, tied for second a shot back.

But expect Choi to continue grabbing most of the attention. "You

could see the joy he has when he plays," said Green Bay Packers quarterback Rodgers, who introduced himself at the start of the day with a few Korean greetings.

"He's a good player. He made a lot of great swings out there."

PGA TOUR

New world c'ship can save Test cricket: ICC

DHAKA • Test cricket is "dying", the chairman of the sport's governing body warned on Thursday, adding the new nine-team world championship could help save the longest format of the game.

While Tests in Australia and England still draw sizeable crowds, filling stadiums and boosting interest in the five-day game has been a challenge for years.

"We are trying to see whether (the) Test championship can gener-

ate interest, because Test cricket is actually dying, to be honest," International Cricket Council (ICC) chairman Shashank Manohar told reporters in Dhaka.

"So to improve the situation, we are trying ways and means. The board came to a conclusion that if we start a Test championship, it would keep Test cricket alive and generate more interest."

The Ashes series between rivals England and Australia will kick off

the World Test Championship in July, and the two best sides in the table will face off in the final in 2021.

Manohar, who is in the country to watch the final of the Bangladesh Premier League Twenty20 tournament, felt the shortest version of the game now provides maximum ratings for broadcasters.

"Nowadays, people don't have five days... to watch a Test match. From 10 to 5, everybody has their

own job to do, so it is very difficult for them to watch (Tests)," he said.

"T20s are over in 3½ hours, like watching a movie. Therefore, it is picking up very fast."

Manohar, a former president of the Indian cricket board, said the sport still faces challenges in its bid to become more global.

ICC officials in the past have expressed their willingness to submit an application for cricket to be included in the Paris 2024 Olympics.

But Manohar admitted to logistical obstacles, such as suitable venues, before conceding there was still some way to go before cricket can feature on the biggest stage.

He added: "There are certain countries which are still not convinced whether to participate..."

The only time cricket was played at the Olympics was in 1900, with just two teams - Britain and France. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Haas mark new sponsor with 'iconic' new look

LONDON • While the Haas Formula One team have transformed their old grey livery into a sleek black-and-gold look, drivers Romain Grosjean and Kevin Magnussen are fully aware it will take more than an "iconic" makeover to elevate their podium chances this season.

The duo were at a launch on Thursday as the covers came off the team's rebranded car - reminiscent of the now-defunct Lotus team - at the grand foyer of London's Royal Automobile Club.

The American-owned outfit have signed a deal with British-based Rich Energy, an energy drink start-up depicted by entrepreneur front-man William Storey as a "David ready to take on the Goliath of the industry".

With title sponsor Rich Energy on board, more eyes will be on Haas, who have traditionally promoted their machine tools business through their racing team. But team

principal Guenther Steiner has welcomed "the accountability" and "pressure" that comes with that.

France's Grosjean and Dane Magnussen have also bought into the "massive ambition" shown by Storey, who intends to challenge Red Bull on and off the track.

However, the gulf between the sport's top three - champions Mercedes, Ferrari and Red Bull - and the other teams remains a huge one.

Only once last year, just like the season before, did a driver from a team outside the top three appear on the podium, and both of those races involved some freak circumstances.

Although Haas, who finished fifth last term, are unlikely to be "serious contenders for podium positions straight away", Grosjean is targeting fourth - at least until the rules change in 2021.

He told reporters: "The top three teams are going to be the same



The Haas Formula One team showing their car's new colour scheme, reflecting new sponsorship from energy drinks company Rich Energy, at a media event at London's Royal Automobile Club on Thursday. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

ones. At the moment, it feels like we're doing a 100m race, but some are already starting 40m into the race, so no chance to compete."

"But last year we finished P4, P5 a couple of times, it doesn't take a lot.

Not a lot more has to happen and you're on the podium. That's the thing with F1, you never really know."

Magnussen said: "We wanted to get up there with the competitive

teams, and now we need to hold on to it. And holding on to it means that you need to improve."

Haas entered the sport in 2016 and have yet to score a podium finish. REUTERS

SportsWorld

Scrivener, Flanagan, Kaufman lead in Vic

GEELONG • Australia's Jason Scrivener and Nick Flanagan shared a two-shot lead while American Kim Kaufman took charge of the women's tournament at the pioneering Vic Open golf tournament yesterday.

The event, co-sanctioned by the European Tour and the LPGA Tour, is the only one in the world with male and female fields playing, in alternate groups, on the same course and for equal prize money.

Scrivener carded six birdies in his six-under 66 on day two while fellow Australian Flanagan shot a 68 to go with his opening 62. Kaufman, who has never won on the LPGA Tour, fired her second 66 in a row to be two ahead of Japan's Haru Nomura.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

IPC to lift ban on Russia by mid-March

MOSCOW • The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) said yesterday it would lift the ban on the Russian Paralympic Committee (RPC) by March 15, under certain conditions.

Russia has been barred from international Paralympic competitions since August 2016 over allegations of state-sponsored doping similar to the ones that led to the suspension of its athletics federation and anti-doping agency.

The IPC added the RPC had met 69 of the 70 reinstatement criteria outlined in 2016, and it would publish criteria for it to keep its conditional reinstatement. REUTERS

Fire at Flamengo facility kills 10 people

RIO DE JANEIRO • A fire swept through the training centre and lodgings of Brazilian football club Flamengo yesterday, killing 10 people, including members of the club's youth side.

At least three youths aged 14 and 15 were injured in the blaze, which reportedly started after an air-conditioner caught fire, with one of them said to be in a serious condition.

O Globo newspaper reported that the building did not have the correct permits and one of the deceased has since been identified as 15-year-old goalkeeper Christian Esmerio. REUTERS

Solskjaer is EPL manager for January

LONDON • Manchester United caretaker boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer was named January's English Premier League manager of the month yesterday after an unbeaten start to his tenure at Old Trafford.

The Norwegian, who replaced Jose Mourinho in December, becomes the first United manager to receive the award since long-time boss Alex Ferguson in October 2012, during the season when the club last won the league title. REUTERS

2020 Tokyo Olympic medals from e-waste

TOKYO • All medals for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics will be made from metal collected by recycling electronic waste, Games organisers said yesterday.

The e-waste includes old smartphones and laptops collected from the public. Recycled metal has also been collected from local Japanese businesses and industry.

Organisers had set a target to collect 30.3kg of gold, 4,100kg of silver and 2,700kg of bronze. They hit the target for bronze last June, and by October had more than 90 per cent of the gold and 85 per cent of the silver.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

FINAL SWANISON FOR DOUGLAS WHITE

After a career spanning more than 22 years, 'Durban Demon' signs off with seven races

It is going to be an emotional day at Sha Tin in Hong Kong tomorrow. It's when racing fans rise as one to salute a special friend they call the "Durban Demon".

That's Douglas Whyte. A legend in racing-crazy Hong Kong, tomorrow will be the last time the great man walks into the mounting yard, smacking his whip on his thigh as

he prepares for yet another assault.

More than 22 years after he first walked in, Whyte, 47, would later pack up his saddle for the final time as a professional rider.

"It'll be hard for me," the South African said. "I've been here for so long. It's like home. This place is all I've ever known."

Now, all of a sudden, the man who

won 13 consecutive Hong Kong championships and notched an incredible 1,813 wins including Group 1s and Derbies, has only seven rides before it's over and his life as a "Douglas Whyte, horse trainer" begins.

"I think it'll be a lot more emotional than last Wednesday at Happy Valley," he said, recalling the crowd's warmth and the jockeys' guard of honour after his final race at the city track.

On his successes, Whyte said: "I'm a very determined person. I've this hunger. Like when I won the

premiership the first time, I knew I was going to do it the second time.

"I didn't think I was going to do it 13 times but, once I got that hunger and that desire, nothing was going to stop me."

Whyte's concluding line-up of rides starts with Mr Croissant in Race 2 and continues with Dances With Dragon, Murray's Partners, Storm Signal, Seven Heavens, Elite Patch and Uncle Steve.

Ever the competitor, Whyte is hoping for a fairy-tale ending but acknowledges that this day alone is

about more than the win.

"I just hope I get a good send-off," he said. "A lot of my horses are going to be under the odds and I know there's going to be expectations from the public."

Whyte knows all about the sharp end of the Hong Kong punters' tongues when a favourite goes down. He hopes it doesn't happen on his last day.

"It's very important for me to have a winner," he said. "But it's not the be-all and end-all because the be-all is my new career. It's about

me being around and the public watching me for the last time."

"The one thing that I'm hoping is that I don't get the public moaning if I don't ride a winner. A winner's going to be in here," he added, pointing to his heart.

"It's very important, but it's about the day going well and I hope everyone appreciates having watched me."

• Tomorrow's Hong Kong (Sha Tin) form analysis was not available at press time.

SUNDAY'S HONG KONG (SHA TIN) RACE CARD

RACE 1

TIME : 1:00

No.	Horse Name	Trainer	Jockey	wt(lb)	Bar
1	KEEP WINNING	C W CHANG	H N WONG	133	1
2	INDIGENOUS STAR	P F YU	M HARLEY	130	11
3	NASHASHUK	J SZE	J MOORE	129	12
4	ROCKAGE	F LOR	K TETAN	129	2
5	MREBON	CH YIP	S DE SOUSA	127	2
6	SOCCER BRAVE	D FERRARIS	A SANNA	127	6
7	ROCHFORD	LHO	M F POON	127	8
8	GREATSON	LHO	M F POON	120	8
9	HIDDEN SPIRIT	P O SULLIVAN	M CHADWICK	117	9
10	RICHITY FORTUNE	K H TING	H TMO	117	13
11	PADDINGTON	W Y SO	G VAN NIEKERK	115	3
12	COUR VALANT	K L MAN	A ABEL	113	5
13	GOBISTORM	TP YUNG	M L YEUNG	113	4

CLASS 5 TURF - 1200m

Stakes: HK\$690,000

No.	Horse Name	Trainer	Jockey	wt(lb)	Bar
4	PACKING WARRIOR	A S CRUZ	S DE SOUSA	123	5
5	SAVVY SIX	A S CRUZ	A S CRUZ	122	3
6	ENRICHMENT	J SZE	A S CRUZ	122	3
7	GIANT TURTLE	A T MILLARD	H TMO	121	9
8	DANCES WITH DRAGON	LHO	D WHYTE	120	6
9	GRAND CHANCELLOR	J MOORE	M CHADWICK	118	8

TIME : 2:30

No.	Horse Name	Trainer	Jockey	wt(lb)	Bar
1	ALL YOU NEED	ROBSON	Z PURTON	133	1
2	DR PROACTIVE	K H TING	H TMO	132	5
3	GENEROUS HEART	CH YIP	J MOORE	131	3
4	BOND ELEGANCE	J SZE	J MOORE	127	8
5	MR RIGHT	H N WONG	H N WONG	127	12
6	COBY OPPA	F LOR	J MOORE	125	9
7	BORNTOACHIEVE	Y S TSUI	S DE SOUSA	122	2
8	DRACE	D FERRARIS	N CALLAN	122	9
9	EVER STRONG	K L MAN	C YHO	121	11
10	ALCAZAR	J MOORE	M F POON	117	7
11	FAME AND FORTUNE	D J HALL	M L YEUNG	117	7
12	MASSIVE MILLENNIUM	TP YUNG	M L YEUNG	116	4

RACE 5

TIME : 3:10

No.	Horse Name	Trainer	Jockey	wt(lb)	Bar
1	SUNNY POWER	K W LUI	C YHO	133	3
2	ROMANTIC CHEF	C S LUM	Z PURTON	132	8
3	FLYING FAMOUS	F LOR	A ABEL	129	4
4	HIN HUNTSWINN	CH YIP	W LAL	126	3
5	FINNEMAG	K L MAN	D WHYTE	125	9
6	REYES MONTJAC	LHO	N CALLAN	125	2
7	EMPIRE STAR	B CURRIE	U RUSPOLI	125	12
8	WINWIN RUBY	K L MAN	B CURRIE	122	6
9	CURLING LUXURY	Y S TSUI	S DE SOUSA	119	7
10	CHU CHOW KID	TP YUNG	M L YEUNG	118	5
11	MOTHER MARY	W Y SO	M L YEUNG	115	11
12	MEGATON	P F YU	M L YEUNG	115	11

RACE 3

TIME : 2:00

No.	Horse Name	Trainer	Jockey	wt(lb)	Bar
1	TIGRE DU TERRE	C FOWNES	Z PURTON	124	7
2	CHARITY GO	S C SHUM	K TETAN	123	1
3	HEAVENLY THOUGHT	F LOR	A ABEL	123	2

CLASS 2 TURF - 2000m

Stakes: HK\$1,950,000

No.	Horse Name	Trainer	Jockey	wt(lb)	Bar
5	Casah	13.7% Hickmatt	14.4%		
6	Caserta	8.8% Murphy	10.6%		
7	Crowthe	14.5% Theodore	11.4%		
8	Huxtabl	12.5% T Double	12.5%		
9	J Toeroek	10.7% D Jolly	15.4%		
10	Caboch	6.0% Young	9.4%		
11	Macfarla	12.2% R Balfour	9.4%		
12	Zahra	12.3%			
13	B Jones	8.7%			

CLASS 1 TURF - 1200m

Stakes: HK\$920,000

No.	Horse Name	Trainer	Jockey	wt(lb)	Bar
1	MARQUILA	C W CHANG	N CALLAN	131	14
2	SIMPLY BIG	F LOR	U RUSPOLI	128	6
3	THE CREATHEE	J MOORE	J MOORE	126	11
4	CRAIG'S STAR	S DE SOUSA	S DE SOUSA	125	10
5	FRIENDS OF NAINING	CH YIP	H N WONG	124	7
6	CIRCUIT THREE	A S CRUZ	K TETAN	123	3
7	ESTAR	K L MAN	A ABEL	123	9
8	LORZ	P F YU	M F POON	123	2
9	MR CROISSANT	W Y SO	D WHYTE	122	2
10	PRINCE OF GEMS	CH YIP	Z PURTON	123	13
11	SOCCER MASTER	D FERRARIS	A SANNA	123	12
12	KING MORTAR	LHO	H TMO	122	8
13	YEE CHEUNG PEGASUS	D J HALL	C YHO	121	4
14	LETSGO FREE	K H TING	M L YEUNG	113	1

CLASS 3 TURF - 1000m

Stakes: HK\$1,380,000

No.	Horse Name	Trainer	Jockey	wt(lb)	Bar
1	I AM POWER	LHO	H TMO	133	6
2	SEVEN HEAVENS	C FOWNES	D WHYTE	132	10
3	SPRING KING	D WHYTE	H N WONG	130	12
4	MY BEGINS'LUCK	D FERRARIS	H N WONG	129	9
5	CEREFINO	W Y SO	A SANNA	125	9
6	GUNVOR	Y S TSUI	N CALLAN	125	14

RACE 6

TIME : 3:40

No.	Horse Name	Trainer	Jockey	wt(lb)	Bar
1	BIG FORTUNE	LHO	H TMO	133	4
2	CALING THE SHOTS	D FERRARIS	N CALLAN	132	13
3	SUPER STAR	S C SHUM	A SANNA	131	12
4	FRESH POWER	A T MILLARD	S DE SOUSA	131	3
5	GUY DRAGON	Y S TSUI	S DE SOUSA	129	14
6	FORTUNATE RUNNER	W Y SO	K C LEUNG	129	5
7	MURRAY'S PARTNERS	K W LUI	M F POON	128	11
8	COOLEE	CH YIP	D WHYTE	126	7
9	COLLEGE	TP YUNG	U RUSPOLI	123	2
10	DESTINY	D J HALL	D WHYTE	122	6
11	SHARPDM	P F YU	J MOORE	121	9
12	DIAMOND LEGEND	A S CRUZ	H N WONG	119	3

RACE 7

TIME : 4:10

No.	Horse Name	Trainer	Jockey	wt(lb)	Bar
1	SAUL'S SPECIAL	C W CHANG	K TETAN	128	4
2	RAGING BUTZKRIE	J SZE	J MOORE	127	10
3	ASIA RISE	Y S TSUI	U RUSPOLI	126	5
4	HINCHINLO	W Y SO	Z PURTON	123	7
5	HAPPY FAMILY	LHO	H TMO	122	3
6	KING OF HEARTS	A S CRUZ	C YHO	121	6
7	LEON PERFECTION	CH YIP	A ABEL	118	2
8	MY DARLING	TP YUNG	M L YEUNG	118	1
9	SHANGHAI MASTER	K W LUI	H N WONG	118	8

RACE 8

TIME : 4:40

No.	Horse Name	Trainer	Jockey	wt(lb)	Bar
1	I AM POWER	LHO	H TMO	133	6
2	SEVEN HEAVENS	C FOWNES	D WHYTE	132	10
3	SPRING KING	D WHYTE	H N WONG	130	12
4	MY BEGINS'LUCK	D FERRARIS	H N WONG	129	9
5	CEREFINO	W Y SO	A SANNA	125	9
6	GUNVOR	Y S TSUI	N CALLAN	125	14

RACE 9

TIME : 5:15

No.	Horse Name	Trainer	Jockey	wt(lb)	Bar
1	FORZA ANGEL	Y S TSUI	A ABEL	133	8
2	HARBOR ALERT	C W CHANG	H TMO	133	1
3	ELITE PATCH	J MOORE	D WHYTE	129	2
4	SPEEDY LUCK	P F YU	C YHO	128	4
5	BIZ POWER	W Y SO	K C LEUNG	128	3
6	ROMAN IMPERO	CH YIP	C YHO	126	11
7	SUNSHINE FANTASY	A S CRUZ	M F POON	125	9
8	NOBLE LOVE	F LOR	S DE SOUSA	123	4
9	GOLDIE FLANKER	P O SULLIVAN	J MOORE	122	7
10	SHIMMER AND SHINE	C FOWNES	K TETAN	121	10
11	AMAZING STAR	K H TING	H N WONG	118	5
12	PHANTOM FALCON	LHO	W LAL	118	12

RACE 10

TIME : 5:50

No.	Horse Name	Trainer	Jockey	wt(lb)	Bar
1	BOMBAY BLITZ	C FOWNES	Z PURTON	133	3
2	LAND GRANT	A T MILLARD	M CHADWICK	133	10
3	INVICIBLE FRESH	P F YU	N F POON	130	11
4	MR WEALTH	K L MAN	N CALLAN	128	13
5	EPITIMUM	LHO	H N WONG	127	12
6	FLYING ROMUS	C YHO	C YHO	127	11
7	UNCLE STEVE	J MOORE	D WHYTE	123	4
8	RIGHT CHOICE	F LOR	S DE SOUSA	121	2
9	HIGH VOLTAGE	K W LUI	K C LEUNG	120	4
10	SMART BOY	TP YUNG	U RUSPOLI	119	9
11	SMART PATCH	P O SULLIVAN	C MURRAY	119	6
12	HOMERUN	K H TING	A ABEL	116	8
13	GALLANTRI	J MOORE	J MOORE	116	9
14	INVICIBLE MISSILE	W Y SO	K TETAN	115	9

RACE 11

TIME : 6:20

No.	Horse Name	Trainer	Jockey	wt(lb)	Bar
1	ROYAL CLOUTIER	C W CHANG	K TETAN	128	4
2	RAGING BUTZKRIE	J SZE	J MOORE	127	10
3	ASIA RISE	Y S TSUI	U RUSPOLI	126	5
4	HINCHINLO	W Y SO	Z PURTON	123	7
5	HAPPY FAMILY	LHO	H TMO	122	3
6	KING OF HEARTS	A S CRUZ	C YHO	121	6
7	LEON PERFECTION	CH YIP	A ABEL	118	2
8	MY DARLING	TP YUNG	M L YEUNG	118	1
9	SHANGHAI MASTER	K W LUI	H N WONG	118	8

RACE 12

TIME : 6:50

No.	Horse Name	Trainer	Jockey	wt(lb)	Bar
1	ROYAL CLOUTIER	C W CHANG	K TETAN	128	4
2	RAGING BUTZKRIE	J SZE	J MOORE	127	10
3	ASIA RISE	Y S TSUI	U RUSPOLI	126	5
4	HINCHINLO	W Y SO	Z PURTON	123	7
5	HAPPY FAMILY	LHO	H TMO	122	3
6	KING OF HEARTS	A S CRUZ	C YHO	121	6
7	LEON PERFECTION	CH YIP	A ABEL	118	2
8	MY DARLING	TP YUNG	M L YEUNG	118	1
9	SHANGHAI MASTER	K W LUI	H N WONG	118	8

RACE 13

TIME : 7:20

No.	Horse Name	Trainer	Jockey	wt(lb)	Bar
1	ROYAL CLOUTIER	C W CHANG	K TETAN	128	4
2	RAGING BUTZKRIE	J SZE	J MOORE	127	10
3	ASIA RISE	Y S TSUI	U RUSPOLI	126	5
4	HINCHINLO	W Y SO	Z PURTON	123	7
5	HAPPY FAMILY	LHO	H TMO	122	3
6	KING OF HEARTS	A S CRUZ	C YHO	121	6
7	LEON PERFECTION	CH YIP	A ABEL	118	2
8	MY DARLING	TP YUNG	M L YEUNG	118	1
9	SHANGHAI MASTER	K W LUI	H N WONG	118	8

RACE 14

TIME : 7:50

No.	Horse Name	
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SALVADOR GIVES NOH A 'DOUBLE'



Jockey Noh Senari steering Salvador to victory in Race 2. ST PHOTO: DAVE LIM

Race 2 winner finishes strong; Super Dynasty makes it a pillar-to-post affair in Race 3

Brian Miller

Jockey Noh Senari clenched his fist and grinned cheekily when Salvador, his mount in Race 2 at Kranji yesterday, beat them all over the 1,200m trip.

There was no holding back his delight. And why not? He had won the last race on Wednesday evening and here he was winning on his first ride yesterday.

But, even if it wasn't a "race to race double", the clenched fist was in order.

You see, Noh had won a difficult race on a horse which wasn't 100 per cent ready – even if he had trialled well coming into the contest.

Indeed, Salvador was unsighted in the early part of the Open Maiden sprint.

Orient Express, Make U Famous,

Lucky Enough and Well Deserved went like crazy as they disputed the lead.

The four front-runners were still going hell for leather when Noh peeled Salvador wide for clear running. Given a few whacks, Salvador lengthened strides and gobbled up the leading pack with relish.

So smooth were his strides that at the 150m mark, it was evident that his momentum would carry him home.

So Noh did the steering and Salvador did the rest.

At the post, they were ³/₄ lengths in front of Wind Trail who, in turn was almost two lengths ahead of Well Deserved, who ran third.

A four-year-old who had run some pretty decent races in Australia, where he finished second on three occasions, Salvador could be one of the better horses in trainer

Steven Burridge's yard this season.

Noh would miss out on a race-day double when My Friends, his mount in Race 4, was soundly beaten into second spot by Sacred Don who, incidentally, was The New Paper's Best Bet of the Day.

Noh looked like he had it all sewn up when My Friends hit the front 200m out. But he had no answer to Sacred Don, who powered home under the vigorous riding of Benny Woodworth.

But while Salvador came from behind to claim victory in Race 2, and Sacred Don charged home over the concluding stages to get the goodies, Super Dynasty's win in Race 3 was an exhibition of a perfect front-running race.

Clearing the chute cleanly, Vlad Duric brought the grey Super Dynasty to the front soon after and it was "game over". Indeed, had he looked back when they were 300m from home, he would have seen panic on the faces of the chasing pack.

So, full marks to Duric for his jock-

eyship and Lee Freedman, who provided the champion rider with the best possible horse to do the job.

Winless for 10 months, Super Dynasty came into the contest on the back of a terrific last-start performance when second in a tight finish to Gentlemen Agreement on Jan 25.

This was to be just his third attempt over the mile and astute punters reckoned the extra distance would make the winning difference. However, as Freedman revealed later in his post-race comments, it was the removal of the blinkers which did the trick.

"We took the blinkers off," said the champion trainer. "And that made the difference."

Duric agreed that it helped but added: "He wanted the distance. I'd say this horse has got ability."

So, there you have it. Mark down Super Dynasty as a horse to follow. With his super speed, he'll have you cheering from go to whoa.

brian@sph.com.sg

Friday's South Africa results

RACE 1

1st 1 Keeping Secrets (\$31-\$10)

2nd 4 Sun Up (\$6)

3rd 12 Thokzine (\$11)

4th 2 Angel Jolee

Forecast \$9

Place Forecast (1-4) \$5, (1-12) \$14,

(4-12) \$9 Tierce \$161 Trio \$29

Quartet No winner \$434 carried forward)

RACE 2

1st 2 Madame Speaker (\$11-\$6)

2nd 3 March Music (\$8)

3rd 4 Western Angel (No 3rd dividend)

4th 1 Klever Kathy

Forecast \$6 Tierce \$35

Trio \$11 Quartet \$58

RACE 3

1st 3 Big Fish (\$8-\$6)

2nd 2 Little Drummer Boy (\$12)

3rd 4 Peking Tyson (\$12)

4th 5 Mindmymooood

Forecast \$12

Place Forecast (2-3) \$5, (3-4) \$10,

(2-4) \$27

Tierce \$91 Trio \$36 Quartet \$232

Scratching: 8 John In Flight

RACE 4

1st 9 Ben-Hur (\$18-\$7)

2nd 4 Green Lantern (\$7)

3rd 10 Story Of My Life (\$12)

4th 1 Mangrove

Forecast \$11 Place Forecast (4-9)

\$7, (9-10) \$11, (4-10) \$8

Tierce \$100 Trio \$22

Quartet \$571, \$702 carried forward)

RACE 5

1st 2 Desert Chief (\$19-\$8)

2nd 1 Seattle Swing (\$8)

3rd 10 Sunday Falls (\$18)

4th 4 Leadman

Forecast \$13 Place Forecast (1-2)

\$7, (2-10) \$15, (1-10) \$18 Tierce

\$194 Trio \$58 Quartet No winner

(\$1,480 carried forward)

RACE 6

1st 3 Multi Gold (\$67-\$17)

2nd 8 Angel Of Athens (\$16)

3rd 1 Evolver (\$8)

4th 6 In A Perfect World

Forecast \$104

Place Forecast (3-8) \$41, (1-3)

\$25, (1-8) \$25

Tierce \$6,384 Trio \$178

Quartet No winner \$3,664

carried forward)

RACE 7

1st 5 Highland Hero (\$18-\$8)

2nd 7 The Carpenter (\$12)

3rd 9 Ribovar (\$59)

4th 2 Alamito Bay

Forecast \$64

Place Forecast (5-7) \$20, (5-9)

\$55, (7-9) \$94

Tierce No winner \$3,182 carried

forward)

Trio \$1,727

Quartet No winner \$5,752

carried forward)

Result of Race 8 was not available at press time. Log on to

www.singaporepools.com.sg for

the results.

FRIDAY'S SINGAPORE (POLYTRACK/SHORT COURSE D) RESULTS

RACE 1

3 SMART INVESTMENT 58 (19-8)

7 HOST THE NATION 56.5c55.5 (30-10)

9 FIRST LIGHT 56.5 (19-37)

4 HERO I AM 58 (18-7)

5 SACRED TONIC 58 (119-27)

10 MIKCAIPHO 56.5 (34-9)

1 THUNDERSTRUCK 58 (31-13)

11 EDDIE GRAY 56.5 (91-20)

6 DAYVAN 56.5c53.5 (229-44)

8 VESONTIO 56.5 (90-25)

12 GOLDEN MILE 56.5 (166-32)

2 SUPER EMPEROR 56.5c57 (177-38)

Winning stable: Smart Bet. Trainer: M Yusuf. Time: 1min 12.98sec (Going: good). Forecast: \$17. Tierce: \$922.

Quartet: \$3202. P Forecast: \$7 (3-7), \$54 (7-9), \$50 (3-9). Trio: \$218.

Course scratchings: 13 Rocket Fighter 14 Pacific Mystical

RACE 2

3 SALVADOR 57.5c56 (17-8)

4 WIND TRAIL 57.5 (144-28)

3 YAYA PAPAIA 57 (19-6)

12 EXTRA WIN 56 (100-19)

5 ASHHAB 57.5 (16-8)

10 LUCKY ENOUGH 57.5 (52-10)

11 CLOUD SHADOW 57.5c53.5 (326-67)

ORIENT EXPRESS 57.5 (51-16)

8 JK FLASH 57.5 (469-82)

11 STANDOUT 57.5c56.5 (46-13)

12 GOLDEN STATES 57.5c54.5 (199-34)

6 MAKE U FAMOUS 57.5c56.5 (305-68)

Winning stable: Racing Bloodstock. Trainer: S Burridge. Time: 1min 10.68sec (good). Forecast: \$96.

Tierce: \$582. Quartet: No winner (\$1432 jackpot carried forward to next race).

P Forecast: \$27 (3-4), \$46 (4-2), \$5 (3-2). Trio: \$117. Course scratchings: 9 Leo 14 Over De Top

RACE 3

2 SUPER DYNASTY 57 (22-9)

4 LIM'S PRIDE 56.5c55.5 (40-13)

3 YAYA PAPAIA 57 (19-6)

9 I'M INCREDIBLE 56.5 (25-10)

10 SUN PITTSBURGH 54.5 (49-16)

6 PLATO 55 (57-16)

8 HENG KINGDOM 54.5 (115-27)

Winning stable: Raffles Racing. Trainer: M Walker. Time: 1min 23.39sec (good). Forecast: \$18. Tierce: \$48.

Quartet: \$237. P Forecast: \$6 (4-2), \$8 (2-3), \$5 (4-3). Trio: \$14.

RACE 4

2 5516 Stone Town 57.0

3 6258 Moni 57.0

4 1321 Stade Velodrom 57.0

5 6331 Strategic Glass 57.5

6 4051 Surface To Surfa 56.5

7 2x32 October Date 54.5

8 8168 Costa Lente 54.0

9 0223 Pass The Glass 54.0

10 5754 Hosta La Thoma 54.0

11 3473 Centenary Shot 54.0

12 2160 Daddy's Littlef 54.0

1 8x1 Micic 59.0

2 157 Ginger Beer 59.0

3 2487 Perfect Aim 57.5

4 1457 Crystal Glass 58.5

5 2521 Zepheoth 57.0

6 1822 Olajunji 57.0

7 6247 Normandy Lad 54.0

8 4896 Kappy Lass 54.0

1 415x Deep Image 60.5

2 7489 Aanvoerder 57.5

3 252x Sn Barnabus 57.5

4 5811 Wine Barrel 57.5

5 026x Duke Of Christ 57.0

6 x002 Le Maffan 56.0

7 1x58 Red Mak 56.5

8 4542 Whodunnit 56.5

9 7541 Fast Ari 54.0

11 7986 Sal The Stars 54.0

1 698x Detective 58.0

2 04x1 Mallongue 58.5

3 076x Speed Bandit 58.5

4 6592 Sleep Right Up 58.5

5 8621 Morgs Freeman 58.0

6 9883 Eversready 56.5

7 3556 Waychinich 56.5

8 10030 Nossuh 54.0

9 6458 Dingo Jewel 56.0

10 7007 Reaction 56.0

11 100x Second Step 56.5

12 523x Delantly 56.5

1 184x Zalomea 58.5

2 26x1 Art Collection 57.5

1 698x Detective 58.0

2 04x1 Mallongue 58.5

3 076x Speed Bandit 58.5

4 6592 Sleep Right Up 58.5

5 8621 Morgs Freeman 58.0

6 9883 Eversready 56.5

7 3556 Waychinich 56.5

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1 698x Detective 58.0

2 04x1 Mallongue 58.5

3 076x Speed Bandit 58.5

4 6592 Sleep Right Up 58.5

5 8621 Morgs Freeman 58.0

6 9883 Evers

SPORT

RIDHWAN'S TITLE BOUT POSTPONED

WBC fight set for March 29, the biggest for a local boxer, could be moved to July: Promoter

Sazali Abdul Aziz

Singapore's top professional boxer Muhammad Ridhwan will have to wait for his chance to avenge his loss to Paulus Ambunda, after fight promoter Ringstar announced yesterday that the March 29 bout has been postponed.

The World Boxing Council (WBC) silver featherweight title fight would have been the biggest fight for any Singaporean boxer.

But, eight weeks out, Ringstar said in a Facebook post that it can-

celled next month's show "due to certain developments... (and) in the best interest of everyone".

Chief executive Scott O'Farrell felt his company could not deliver the standard of show it wanted.

"Things were dragging, being delayed, it's just one of those things, really," he told The Straits Times. "I'm very disappointed we couldn't deliver the show as scheduled, but this is what the business is about."

"We could have done a show (on March 29), but it would have been substandard, and it is not how Ringstar wants to be portrayed."

Asked if there were funding problems, he said: "No, it's not an issue at all. It's more an issue of things like the lead time for our marketing, sponsors and partners."

Ticket sales, which had been scheduled for Jan 18, did not go "live", he added.

The Briton also said that he is looking at staging the show at the Singapore Indoor Stadium in July, although he said there could be a change in venue.

"We'll see how things go, and if they (the Singapore Sports Hub, which manages the Singapore Indoor Stadium) are OK with the change in date," he said.

Ridhwan, who is in the middle of a three-month long training camp in the Philippines, took the an-



Ringstar founder Scott O'Farrell (centre) says the fight between Singapore boxer Muhammad Ridhwan (left) and Namibia's Paulus Ambunda would have been "substandard" had it gone ahead next month. ST FILE PHOTO

nouncement in his stride.

"As much as this is unwanted, I also believe that everything has got its time and place," the WBC's 25th-ranked featherweight fighter told ST. "I think all these events (happen) just to teach me and prepare me for my destiny, which is to be a champion."

"Ringstar will keep me active in the meantime till I fight again on

home soil."

He is scheduled to fight twice, on March 23 and May 1, in the Philippines, said O'Farrell.

Last September, Ridhwan lost a split decision to the Namibian Ambunda after 12 rounds in a fight for the International Boxing Organisation (IBO) world super bantamweight title, his only defeat in 12 professional fights.

TAKING IT IN HIS STRIDE

I think all these events (happen) just to teach me and prepare me for my destiny, which is to be a champion.



MUHAMAD RIDHWAN, Singapore's top boxer who is in the middle of a three-month long training camp in the Philippines, on the fight being pushed back.

This is not the first bump in the road for the rematch.

Last month, Ridhwan announced his shock retirement on social media but made a U-turn two days later. He said that a "clash of ideas" and "arguments" had led to the post but did not reveal who the disagreements were with.

msazali@sph.com.sg

Los Angeles Lakers guard Rajon Rondo is delighted after sinking the game-winning basket against the Boston Celtics at TD Garden, as forwards LeBron James and Kyle Kuzma join in the celebrations. The Lakers defeated the hosts 129-128. PHOTO: REUTERS



Rondo's buzzer-beater shuts up 'home' crowd

BOSTON • One championship ring, four All-Star nods and 8½ seasons in Boston.

The TD Garden was where Rajon Rondo made his name as an elite National Basketball Association (NBA) player. While his scoring output has diminished since being traded two months into the 2014-15 season, the veteran still can write "a storybook ending".

That came on Thursday when the guard's buzzer-beating fadeaway

jump shot, the first game-winning basket of his career, dropped into the hoop to silence a raucous arena he considers "home".

The 32-year-old finished with 17 points as the Los Angeles Lakers settled a roller-coaster battle to edge past the Celtics 129-128.

The last-gasp victory, just two days after the Lakers suffered a humiliating 42-point defeat by the Indiana Pacers, made it all the more sweeter for Rondo, as it came in

front of Celtics president of basketball operations Danny Ainge, who drafted him, and his "brother" and Boston great Kevin Garnett, who wore his No. 9 jersey.

In a post-game interview, he said: "It's unbelievable. Obviously, the man upstairs, I give him all the credit. I work on my craft, but at the end of the day, I couldn't have done it without him."

"I couldn't picture it... coming back, where it all started, our team

struggling right now. Hopefully, this will give us confidence."

"We've got more games. I don't play for two, three more days, I can let this sink in."

He also told news website Boston.com: "It definitely feels surreal. I haven't watched the replay yet, but this is one I'll be playing for the rest of my life."

LeBron James, who led all scorers with 28 points, felt his teammate "could not have even dreamed

about that moment".

He added: "To be back here in the Garden, where he won a championship (in the 2007-08 season) and obviously has so many memories of being here."

"For him to get his hands on the ball at that moment and be able to knock that down."

The visitors are now 1½ games behind the Los Angeles Clippers for the West's eighth and final playoff spot. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

James chooses Durant first up again

LOS ANGELES • For the second year in a row, LeBron James opened the National Basketball Association (NBA) All-Star Draft on Thursday night by taking Golden State Warriors forward Kevin Durant as the first overall pick.

The forward, who earned the first choice by leading the NBA in All-Star voting for the second year in a row, never outright revealed his first choice in last year's draft, which was not televised.

But after picking Durant in the event, which was televised on TNT, the Los Angeles Lakers star revealed it was a repeat selection.

Milwaukee Bucks forward Giannis Antetokounmpo, who was named a captain after leading the Eastern Conference in All-Star voting, made it two Warriors in a row by taking guard Stephen Curry.

The captains alternated picks through the rest of the starters but the drama picked up only in the second round, when the "Greek Freak" had first dibs among the reserves and chose Khris Middleton.

That opened up the way for James to take New Orleans' Anthony Davis, who requested a trade on Jan 28 but remained with the Pelicans past the trade deadline.

Numerous reports have indicated Davis wants to join the Lakers, with James and Rich Paul, the agent James shares with Davis, trying to orchestrate his path there.

After James picked the big man, TNT sportscaster Ernie Johnson teased him: "You're sure you want him on your team?"

James replied: "You know, I'm very sure of that" before Antetokounmpo chimed in: "Isn't that tampering?" That brought out laughter from everyone in the studio, before he responded: "Tampering rules do not apply on All-Star weekend."

REUTERS

ALL-STAR GAME 2019	
STARTERS	
TEAM LEBRON	TEAM GIANNIS
LeBron James (LA Lakers)	Giannis Antetokounmpo (Bucks)
Kevin Durant (Warriors)	Stephen Curry (Warriors)
Kyrie Irving (Celtics)	Joel Embiid (76ers)
Kawhi Leonard (Raptors)	Paul George (Thunder)
James Harden (Rockets)	Kemba Walker (Hornets)
RESERVES	
Anthony Davis, Klay Thompson, Damian Lillard, Russell Westbrook, LaMarcus Aldridge, Karl-Anthony Towns, Bradley Beal	Khris Middleton, Nikola Jokic, Ben Simmons, Blake Griffin, D'Angelo Russell, Nikola Vucevic, Kyle Lowry
SPECIAL PICK	
Dwyane Wade	Dirk Nowitzki

Next 48 Hours

TODAY

BASKETBALL

ABL Mono Vampire v CLS Knights (StarHub Ch202, 4pm).

FOOTBALL

English Premier League Fulham v Man United (8.30pm), Liverpool v Bournemouth (11pm), Brighton v Burnley (tomorrow, 1.30am) - Singtel TV Ch102 & StarHub Ch227, Huddersfield v Arsenal (Ch103 & Ch228), Southampton v Cardiff (Ch104 & Ch229), Watford v Everton (Ch105 & Ch230), Palace v West Ham (Ch106 & Ch231) - 10.50pm.

Spanish LaLiga Getafe v Celta (7.55pm), Atletico v Real (11.10pm), Espanyol v Rayo (tomorrow, 1.25am), Girona v Huesca (tomorrow, 3.40am) - StarHub Ch213.

GOLF

European Tour Vic Open: Day 3 (StarHub Ch204, 10am).

TENNIS

Fed Cup Q-final: Czech Rep v Romania, day 1 (Singtel TV Ch116 & StarHub Ch210, 8pm).

TOMORROW

BASKETBALL

ABL Malaysia Dragons v Macau Black Bears (StarHub Ch202, 2.30pm), Spore Slingers v Saigon Heat (OCBC Arena, Ch201, 4pm).

CRICKET

3rd & final T20 Int'l NZ v India (Singtel TV Ch123 & StarHub Ch236, 3pm).

FOOTBALL

English Premier League Tottenham v Leicester (9.30pm), Man City v Chelsea (11.55pm) - Singtel TV Ch102 & StarHub Ch227.

Spanish LaLiga Leganes v Betis (6.55pm), Valencia v Sociedad (11.10pm), Sevilla v Eibar (Monday, 1.25am), Bilbao v Barcelona (Monday, 3.40am) - StarHub Ch213.

GOLF

European Tour Vic Open: Day 4 (StarHub Ch204, 9am).

MIXED MARTIAL ARTS

UFC 234 Whittaker v Gastelum (Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208, 11am).

TENNIS

Fed Cup Q-final: Czech Rep v Romania, day 2 (Singtel TV Ch116 & StarHub Ch210, 8pm).

For latest updates, go to singtel.tv.com.sg & starhubgo.com or check the on-screen TV guide.

life

D **RELAXED RIDE**
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against vibrations
D6&7

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Chloe Fu, 22

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Singapore's Hawker Culture at
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DESIGN: SALLY LAM ST PHOTO: KHALID BABA

Home hideaways

You've decluttered your home Marie Kondo-style but where do you store all those items that spark joy? **Melissa Heng** finds out.
D2&3

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In the home of Mrs Jean Koh, shelves in the study (above) keep the space clutter-free, while concealed storage in the living room houses a television cabinet and shoes, among other things. ST PHOTOS: KHALID BABA

MAKE ROOM FOR MORE

Need space for the things you love? Try built-in storage and multi-purpose furniture



Melissa Heng

After seven years of living in various rented apartments and moving in and out with an assortment of boxed-up belongings, the Koh family finally settled into their own home last year.

While renovating their three-bedroom condominium apartment in River Valley, Mrs Jean Koh, 42, and her husband took the opportunity to sort through their belongings, clear out unnecessary things and simply get organised.

"We unpacked all our boxes and threw or gave away whatever was no longer relevant. We also gave away about 20 per cent of our books," says Mrs Koh, a former personal develop-

ment trainer who is currently studying at Rhema Bible Training Center. She and her husband, a civil servant, have a seven-year-old son.

As for the things they decided to keep, the family worked with interior stylist Priscilla Tan of Styledby.pt to create various storage options for their 1,195 sq ft apartment.

Space-maximising ideas they incorporated include furniture that does double duty and a television cabinet that also has space for shoes.

Much like how the Koh family decluttered before moving into their new place, many others have also

been inspired to go on a cleaning spree, purging items they no longer use or need.

Tidying up has become all the rage this year, thanks to Japanese organising consultant and author Marie Kondo.

The mother-of-two has written four books on organising and her famous method of keeping only things that "spark joy" was brought into the limelight again this year, when the Netflix series Tidying Up With Marie Kondo was released on Jan 1.

While the tidying movement has made it trendy to clean up and clear out items in the home, one still has

to think about storing the things that are both needed and wanted.

Mrs Koh says: "If an organised home is your goal, it is a must to invest in storage solutions, to know what you have and how you want to use your space."

For example, the family rarely watch TV and they wanted the living room to be more of a communal space where conversations can take place easily.

"So we have a built-in TV cabinet with doors that hide the TV when it's not in use. Those doors slide inwards neatly when we want to watch TV," says Mrs Koh.

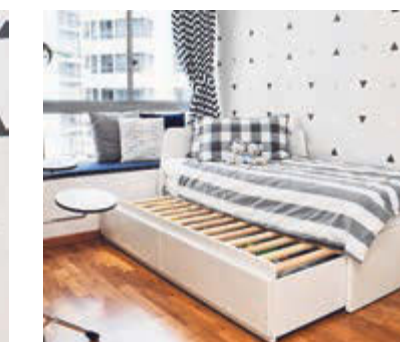
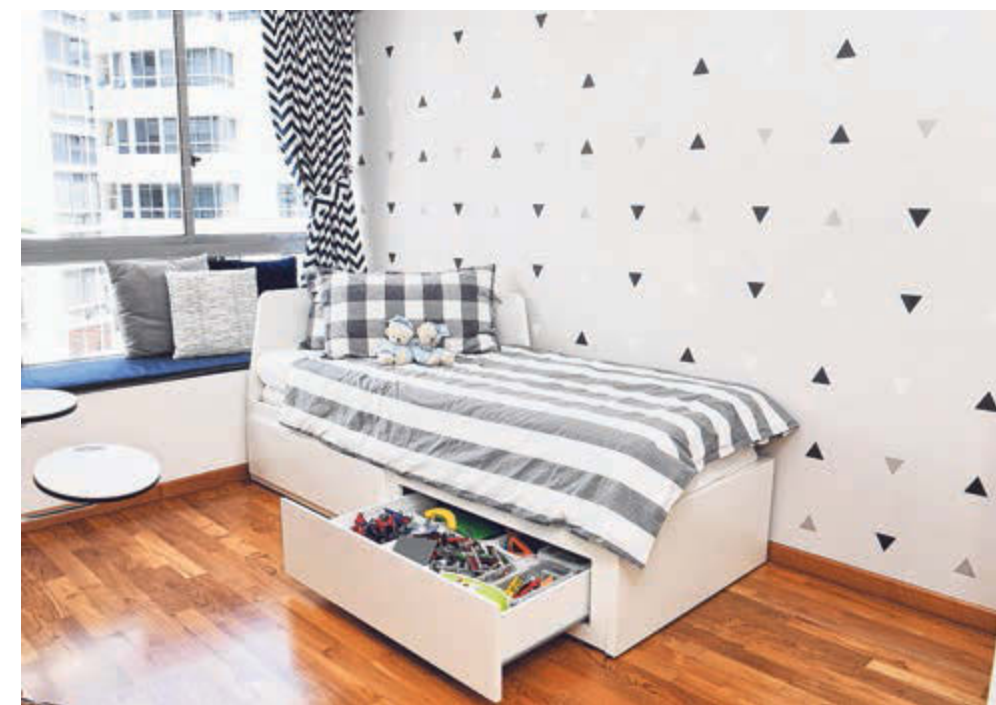
Next to the TV cabinet is a set of

custom-built shelves where shoes as well as exercise equipment like yoga mats and small weights are stored.

Tall white doors keep the TV and shelves out of sight and further help to visually increase the height of the room and give the space a cleaner look.

Another way the family saved space was to pick out furniture that serves multiple functions.

For example, Mrs Koh has a couch that can be converted into a bed. The versatile piece means that there is no need for another mattress which would take up valuable storage space.



(Above and left) The single bed in the room of the home owner's son is multi-purpose. It can also accommodate another single mattress as well as offers storage for toys.

(Far left) Concealed cabinets above the kitchen countertop store food and condiments.

THREE STORAGE TIPS FROM MRS JEAN KOH

1. Allow some space for mess

Give each member of the family a designated drawer or basket where they can "just be messy" and throw in their miscellaneous items. This helps keep things organised as a whole, but still allows for some realistic untidiness.

2. Measure and then measure again

Before you go shopping for furniture or storage solutions, measure everything. Measure the spaces you have as well as any bigger items you might need to store. This will save you time when you make your purchases and ensure that you buy things that will fit the spaces you want them to be in.

3. Make use of all available space

For example, Mrs Koh turned the narrow space between the washing machine and the wall into a space to hang her mop and broom by putting up wall-mounted holder clips.

Her son's single bed also has a pullout compartment that can accommodate another single mattress as well as two drawers where he keeps his toys.

"We chose multi-purpose furniture so we could maximise the space we have. It's good to be able to have a hidden extra bed in case we have guests."

She says another thing to keep in mind when trying to maximise space is to know the dimensions needed for shelves and drawers.

In her study, she has a section of built-in drawers designated for her craft equipment and stationery. "I made these drawers shallower because most of the stationery items are small. Having deeper drawers would mean wasted space."

Asked what else helps her keep things organised, she says it is important to compartmentalise and keep things labelled.

"For my kitchen and wardrobe, I got plastic containers from Daiso to create storage compartments within each shelf. I label each container so I remember where things should go."

Being neat also ensures that she always knows what is in her pantry and closet and does not buy things she does not need.

"It's good to keep your storage space organised as well because when things are neat, they are easier to find too."

melheng@sph.com.sg

Five storage tips from interior design experts

1

Think about your lifestyle needs
Do not just build or buy storage solutions for the sake of it, says Ms April Kwan, activity leader for communication and interior design at Ikea Southeast Asia.

"People often forget to ask themselves, 'What is the function of this space?' Make sure to choose the right products according to your needs."

One key consideration is how often an item will be used. "Products used on a regular basis should be stored in easy-to-reach spaces to ensure efficient storage," she says.

Ms Norizan Sani, head of furniture buying at Courts Singapore, adds that it is good to first think through what you have and visualise how much storage is really needed.

"Some built-in storage spaces simply never get used, especially if they are in high or hard-to-reach places."



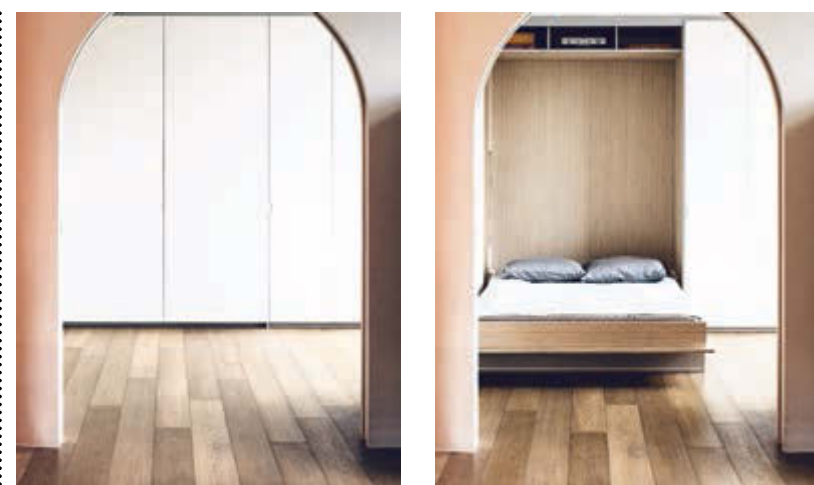
2

Choose multi-purpose furniture
Make use of multi-functional and flexible furniture including sofas with hidden storage functions, says Ms Kwan.

For example, the Vallentuna two-seater modular sofa (\$1,540) from Ikea can be converted into a

double bed and the seats can be raised to reveal hidden storage space.

At Courts, the Index Click Multi-Functional Bedframe (above, \$999) includes a pullout side table and built-in bookshelves and drawers.



3

Create convertible spaces
Maximising a space can mean making it serve more than one purpose.

Mr Yann Follain, head of design and managing director of architecture firm WY+TO, says built-in storage helped to make a spare room more versatile for a client.

The latter had a spare bedroom (above left) which the family wanted

to use as a playground for children, as an extension of the living room if they had visitors or as a guest bedroom. "So the storage we created not only comprises wardrobe space for guests and storage for the kids' toys, but also holds a bed that can be folded up when not in use

(above right). This allows the room to have multiple functions."



4

Make use of the walls
Ms Kwan says people often forget about the space on walls. "Look for bathroom accessories that can help you get the most out of your wall space."

For example, Ikea's Tisken series of bathroom accessories (above) includes baskets, hooks and a towel rack which all come with suction-cup wall mounts.

"They can be removed easily with no damage to walls. With these, you have hooks or bars to hang your towels from and baskets to hold your soaps and shampoos."

5

Vary your shelf, drawer sizes
Mr Follain says it is important to ensure that everything has its place and its own suitable amount of space.

"Instead of using drawers which are of standard sizes, create drawers of various heights so that smaller items do not take up too much space, especially when they cannot be stacked."

He adds that if you are not sure what a cabinet or storage compartment will be used for in the future, adjustable shelves are a useful feature.

At Ikea, there is the Billy bookcase (\$129), which comes with adjustable shelves. For example, the Billy bookcase (\$129), which comes with adjustable shelves.

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1. Ave High Table + 4 High Chairs*
@ \$899 (RRP \$1,398)
HT Size: L 172 x W 100 x H 92 cm
HC Size: L 50 x W 55 x H 64/97 cm
Col: Ash + Black

2. Kato Round DT + 3 DCs*
@ \$629 (RRP \$905)
Size: Dia 90 x H 75 cm
DT Col: Volakas Foil + Gold
DC Col: Pink Velvet + Gold

3. Lolo Series w/ Pine Wood Frame
NEW
a. 3-Tier Shelf @ \$65* (RRP \$90)
Size: L 61 x W 32 x H 82 cm
Col: White / Grey
b. Clothes Rack @ \$85* (RRP \$116)
Size: L 63 x W 59 x H 166 cm
Col: White / Grey
c. Plant Rack w/ 5 Bins @ \$65* (RRP \$90)
Size: L 50 x W 27 x H 152 cm
Col: White

4. Crate Series Col: Walnut + High Gloss Stone + Black
NEW
a. Functional CT @ \$590 (RRP \$767)
Size: L 110 x W 60 x H 39 cm
b. Mini Bar Unit @ \$450* (RRP \$585)
Size: L 51 x W 40 x H 83 cm

5. Gretel 5' Bed @ \$450* (RRP \$637)
Col: Dark Grey + Walnut
Size: L 208 x W 166 x H 104 cm
*Also Available in 6' Bed

6. Della Full Leather L-Shaped Sofa w/ Powered Recliner
Size: L 263 x W 161/90 x H 95 cm
Col: Cool Grey + Black

7. Chianti Series Col: Snowflake White
NEW
a. Full Marble CT Size: L 120 x W 60 x H 45 cm
b. Full Marble Console Size: L 120 x W 40 x H 80 cm

8. Jubilee DT w/ Marble Top
Size: Dia 120 x H 75 cm
Col: Matt Volakas + Dark Grey

9. Doria Full Leather L-Shaped Sofa w/ Powered Recliner
Size: L 263 x W 161/90 x H 95 cm
Col: Cool Grey + Black

10. Della Full Leather L-Shaped Sofa w/ Powered Recliner
Size: L 263 x W 161/90 x H 95 cm
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TheChicHome



The guest room's built-in storage is wrapped around the daybed, which is the space's centrepiece and is enhanced by the feature wall.



In this bedroom, most of the wall space has been turned into stylishly concealed storage.



The bathtub that was previously in the bathroom has been removed. In its place now is a shower compartment.

Hide and keep

Smart designs in this apartment offer hidden storage without compromising on style and practicality

Lynn Tan

One of the biggest issues about moving from a big home to a small one is finding sufficient storage for the things you have.

But for this couple, both legal professionals in their 40s who used to live in a four-storey landed home for almost a decade, the move to a three-bedroom condominium apartment in Meyer Road was relatively pain-free.

Thanks to Mr Adrian Heng, principal consultant of home-grown firm SpaceOne Interior Design Consultancy, they have plenty of storage options in their new 1,400 sq ft home without sacrificing comfort and style.

As Mr Heng also designed their previous home, he was familiar with their lifestyle and aesthetic preferences.

In the new apartment, he re-configured the existing dining, kitchen, store and yard areas to the left of the entrance.

Instead of one large storeroom, he removed the walls and turned the space into two back-to-back built-in storage areas. One side faces the entrance foyer, while the other is accessible from the yard.

"The deep shelves are actually more practical than one large room and help to keep things organised," says Mr Heng.

The existing walls of the kitchen were also removed to create an open-concept dry kitchen and dining area defined by a kitchen island-and-dining table centrepiece.

The island anchors the structure, while the dining table cantilevers from it to achieve a floating effect.

There is plenty of storage for kitchen appliances and cooking utensils, which are concealed behind cabinet doors and drawers.

The living room is a few steps lower than the rest of the apartment, giving it the cosiness of a sunken alcove.

Like most of the furniture and fixtures around the home, almost



A pouf that doubles as a coffee table adds interest to the living room (above), while a sculptural light above the island-dining table (below) serves as a focal point.

PHOTOS: SPH MAGAZINES, ART DIRECTION: NONIE CHEN

everything here is custom-designed by Mr Heng and his team.

"The home owners love to read, so I included two loungers instead of one sofa, which are more suited for reading and relaxing," he says.

The master bedroom and adjacent study-cum-walk-in wardrobe used to be two separate rooms. While Mr Heng removed the walls between them to create a fluid space, he incorporated two concealed doors to separate the spaces if the need arises.

The colour scheme comprises predominantly greys, whites and off-whites because the home owners have a penchant for muted colours, but there are pops of accent colours, such as the teal of the living room loungers and the yellow cushions in the guest room, that stand

out against the neutral background.

The success of this project lies not just in the incorporation of ample storage spaces throughout the home, but in keeping them inconspicuous.

The renovation, whose cost the home owners declined to reveal, took three months. They moved in in April last year.

As one of the home owners puts it: "Adrian has made our process of downsizing painless by creating ample storage spaces, while keeping everything creatively hidden."

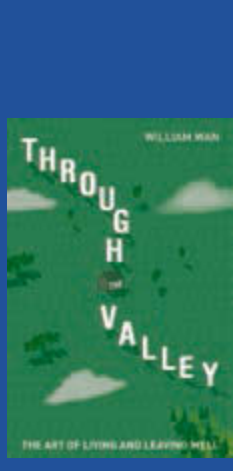
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• This article first appeared in the January issue of Home & Decor, which is published by SPH Magazines.



• Get the February issue of Home & Decor at newsstands or download the digital edition of Home & Decor from the App Store, Magzter or Google Play. Also, see more inspiring homes at www.homeanddecor.com.sg

Celebrate the Art of Living and Leaving Well



The author, Dr William Wan, General Secretary of the Singapore Kindness Movement, will share his unique insights from his book, *THROUGH THE VALLEY*, on how people can age gracefully.

He will be joined by The Straits Times Senior Correspondent Lee Siew Hua.



Get a copy at good bookstores and at stbooks.sg

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How to choose the right doormat

WASHINGTON • Even if you have a no-shoe policy in your house, there will be times when you need to dash in with your shoes on for one last thing, or times when a handyman or repair person needs to wear work boots indoors.

For these situations, doormats are essential.

"With a good brush and stomp, doormats can prevent debris, wet snow and dripping rainwater from entering your home," says Ms Lindsey Handel, a buyer for the garden and home store Terrain in Pennsylvania.

Doormats may help with a comprehensive allergy-fighting plan, too, says Dr Stephen Kimura, a board-certified allergist in Pensacola, Florida. "If you're going to wear your shoes in the house, at least wiping them is going to help some. We've got pollen season now year-round, so these measures are important."

The right doormat depends on whether it will be completely ex-

posed or under a covered porch.

For exposure, Ms Handel recommends coir; for covered exposure, she says you can go for a less-durable jute-and-coir mix. The best thickness depends on whether the mat is inside or outside.

"It's nice to have a softer and thinner rug inside and a more bristly, durable one outside," says Ms Joy Cho of California design studio Oh Joy.

Although Ms Cho, who has two children, has a no-shoe policy at home, she considers doormats a "decorative and fun way to greet guests" and help catch dirt, water and snow before shoes are placed inside the door.

If you have one main entry, she says to go "with one you really love that makes a statement or has a fun greeting".

For secondary entries, she suggests coordinating the mats' look: "They could be exactly the same for consistency or have a similar vibe."

For interior entryways, she re-



A Rope Co doormat (left) handmade in Maine. The right doormat for your house depends on whether it will be outdoors, under a covered porch or indoors.

PHOTO: ROPE CO

cently designed some washable rugs for rug specialist Lorena Canals.

For exterior doors, she likes vinyl Chilewich mats, which are mould-, mildew- and chlorine-resistant, with a water-blocking, slip-resistant vinyl backing. The company's latest design, Simple Stripe, has a functional stripe made of PVC yarns that scrape away debris.

Terrain's Ms Handel says in most climates, the fibre coir, made from coconut husks, is best for exterior doormats that are exposed to the weather.

"The thicker and scratchier the doormat you can find, the better"

for scraping off dirt, she says. She prefers a knot-patterned weave doormat for its classic look.

For a multi-season mat that can handle whatever weather is thrown at it, try a lobster-rope mat, says Ms Lisa Myers, owner of home-goods store Capers in Seattle. "They work to shed the water and they have a little bit of coarseness to the rope that takes the dirt off," she says.

Ms Myers highlights the Rope Co's doormats, handmade in Maine by fifth-generation lobstermen. "They're super durable. I had a similar one for many years and I just hosed it down and it keeps looking great." WASHINGTON POST

RootAwakening



Longevity Spinach a commonly grown medicinal plant

I received a herbal plant (above) from a friend. It grew from about 10cm tall to nearly 80cm. What is this plant and what are its uses? P.V. Udaya Kumar

The plant is botanically known as *Gynura procumbens*. Its common names include Longevity Spinach, Scrambling *Gynura* and *Sambung Nyawa*.

Its young leaves can be eaten raw or cooked as a vegetable. In Singapore, some Chinese believe that eating the leaves can lower blood pressure and reduce blood sugar levels.

This plant can be grown either under direct or filtered sunlight. The soil should be moist and well-drained.

The plant can be propagated easily from stem-cuttings. Note that it is prone to attacks by snails and slugs when grown in an outdoor garden.



Use of the Common Mugwort needs to be guided

What is this plant (above)? Choo Waikin

The plant is a commonly grown medicinal plant that is botanically known as *Artemisia vulgaris*. Its common names are the Common Mug-

wort, Common Wormwood and Moxa. It can be propagated via stem-cuttings and grows best in a sunny location with well-drained soil.

Its scented leaves are bitter and can be eaten raw or cooked. The plant is used to treat a range of ailments, but note that it is toxic when eaten in large amounts.

Pregnant women should not use this herb.

• Answers by Dr Wilson Wong, an NParks-certified practising horticulturist and park manager. He is the founder of Green Culture Singapore and an adjunct assistant professor (Food Science & Technology) at the National University of Singapore.

• Have a gardening query? E-mail it with clear, high-resolution pictures of at least 1MB, if any, and your full name to stlife@sph.com.sg



Drumstick tree has multiple uses

What plant (above) is this? Some people boil the leaves in water and drink it. Does the plant have health benefits? Julia Lee Soo Mui

The tree is botanically known as *Moringa oleifera*. Its common names include Horse-radish Tree, Kelur, Merunggai and Drumstick Tree.

It is a drought-tolerant tree that

needs to be grown on a sunny site with well-drained soil. This plant tends to get straggly with age. It is often kept to a manageable size via frequent pruning, which is also done to promote the production of tender leaves for harvest.

Various parts of the plant are eaten. The young leaves and fruit are most commonly eaten as a vegetable and are a common sight at vegetable stalls in Little India.

The leaves are said to be highly nutritious. The mature, dry seeds are also eaten as a health food.

Red Sessile Joyweed thrives in sunny and moist location

What is the name of this plant (right)? I bought it from the wet market and brewed it into a herbal tea. How do I take care of the plant and how can it grow well? Phua Li Peng



The medicinal plant has a range of common names such as Red Sessile Joyweed, Red Carpet Weed and Bayam Keremak Merah. It is the red-leaved form of *Alternanthera sessilis*.

This plant propagates easily from stem-cuttings. It grows as a herbaceous ground-hugging plant.

For it to thrive, it needs a sunny

site. The soil should be rich in organic matter, well-drained and kept moist at all times. The plant does not tolerate dry soil.

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RAV4 revived

Toyota's compact SUV offers more utility, presence and driveability

Christopher Tan
Senior Correspondent

When the first Toyota RAV4 appeared a quarter of a century ago – when SUVs were not yet mainstream – it created quite a stir with its modern yet rugged design.

But the model gradually lost its shine as time went on. While a slew of bigger, better and funkier SUVs arrived on the scene, Toyota receded into conservatism.

The fifth-generation RAV4 is likely to change things. The car sports an edgy pentagon-themed styling, with its grille, headlights and side profile conforming to the geometric shape.

It is a striking design which communicates tension and strength. It also gives the car a strong road presence, without the loud and fussy shape which the Toyota C-HR prescribes to.

It is about the same length as its predecessor, but wider and with wheels pushed farther to the corners. Parked next to a Land Rover Discovery Sport, the car is not dwarfed, ceding only minimally to the Landie's height and width.

The car is actually wider than the Toyota Harrier, has a longer wheelbase and is lighter by 135kg.

So even though it does not have a turbo engine, the RAV4 feels nippy at the wheel. Its power plant is essentially the same one found in its predecessor, but tuned to produce more.

With 170bhp and 203Nm of torque, it proffers stress-free motoring which only Toyota seems to have mastered. It is not just the powertrain, whose output is adequate but nothing to write home about.

It is how that output is put to use. The car's continuously variable transmission has a fixed first gear like in the Lexus UX, with which it shares many parts. This gives it a sense of urgency, especially at low revs.

Power delivery is seamless, with revs piling up linearly and fairly quickly to 4,000rpm, although most tasks can be accomplished between 2,000rpm and 3,000rpm.



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Power delivery is seamless, with revs piling up linearly and fairly quickly to 4,000rpm, although most tasks can be accomplished between 2,000rpm and 3,000rpm.

The car is well insulated against vibrations and unwanted noises, again contributing to its relaxed state. Every twirl of its well-weighted and tight steering wheel is accompanied by gentle body movements which are completely in sync.

It is a feat, given the car's SUV set-up and its comfort-biased chassis. While it does not have the verve

The RAV4 rides extraordinarily well, with damping action that takes the edge out of the nastiest speed regulators.

Yet, the car is not averse to brisk cornering, completing the task with neutrality and an acceptable amount of body roll. While it does not have the verve

and drama which makes some cars fun, the new RAV4 is a thoroughly likeable carrier which demands very little of you.

The only unlikable thing on it is its infotainment set, which is a button-lined screen with old-school digital display. It would have been all right in the first-generation



The new RAV4 sports an edgy pentagon-themed styling and rides well. Nice touches onboard include wireless phone-charging, electric parking brake with auto hold and powered tailgate with a wide boot access. ST PHOTOS: CHONG JUN LIANG



SPECS/TOYOTA RAV4

Price: \$121,988 with COE

Engine: 1987cc 16-valve inline-4

Transmission: Continuously variable transmission with paddle shift

Power: 170bhp at 6,600rpm

Torque: 203Nm at 4,400rpm

0-100km/h: 10 seconds (estimated)

Top speed: 190km/h

Fuel consumption: 6 litres/100km

Agent: Borneo Motors

RAV4, but not here and now.

There are plans to replace it with a proper colour touchscreen, which hopefully will include reverse camera. Thankfully, there are other nice touches onboard, such as wireless phone-charging, electric parking brake with auto hold, powered tailgate with a wide boot access,

adaptive cruise control with lane departure warning and pedestrian detection.

Outdoorsy features such as rubber mat boot lining, rubber-lined controls and phone cradle give the car a rugged feel. This is reinforced by robust build quality evident across the cabin.

Over a three-day test-drive consisting mostly of city roads, the car averaged 10.5 litres/100km – not brilliant, but not overly shoddy either.

What's brilliant, though, is how a sizeable SUV with an unfanciful drivetrain can drive so well.

christan@sph.com.sg

Torque Shop

I accidentally grazed a plastic garbage bin when reversing. It left some scratches on the left rear fender of my seven-week-old car. A friend suggested I send it back to the dealer to have it repaired and resprayed. There is no dent, but the scratch is very obvious and a somewhat ugly blemish on an otherwise clean and shiny red bodywork. What is the best solution?

You are lucky the garbage bin was not a metal one as that would have caused more damage.

The abrasions caused by the PVC bin are likely to be superficial. As long as you do not see a different colour beneath the blemish, the car's surface finish paint has not been penetrated.

Before you even consider sending it to any body shop, you must make an effort to restore the scratched areas yourself.

It is not as complex as it may sound. Everything you will need is available at car accessory shops or petrol station marts.

Get wax polish and a polishing cloth. Try to avoid the rather abrasive rubbing compound for a start. The wax polish will most likely "clean up" the scratches, removing dust or grit.

In most cases such as yours, the ugly marks can be polished off – with repeated treatment – without cutting deeper into the paintwork.

Getting a respray done for such a minor blemish is the last thing you should do. Factory paint finish can never be duplicated by third-party refurbishers because none will have the process knowledge nor the capability to restore bodywork to factory standards. A manufacturer's original paint finish is therefore the best and most durable.

Even if you do notice some minor signs after your own polishing work, as long as it is not starkly unsightly, you are best leaving it as is.

Remember, nothing even comes close to the original paint finish.

Shreejit Changaroth

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Hyper hooligan

Ducati's latest Hypermotard 950 lives up to its 'wheelie monster' nickname

Pradeep Paul
In Canary Islands, Spain

In the automotive world, motor-bikes are classified as two-wheel-ers. Somebody clearly forgot to tell the Ducati Hypermotard 950 that. This bike thinks one wheel is enough most of the time. Loaded with a torquey 937cc motor that spits out 80 per cent of its power at a mere 3,000rpm, it effortlessly lives up to its "wheelie monster" tag.

Just to prove that the Hypermotard isn't partial to the rear tyre, it lets experienced riders crank out stoppies with as much ease as most of us tear open a bag of chips. Stoppies, in case you're wondering, is a reverse wheelie where you yank on the front brake.

Ever since Ducati pulled the covers off its first Hypermotard way back in 2005, this bike has brought out the hooligan in most riders. This latest version is no different.

Although equipped with the same Testastretta 11 engine as the outgoing Hypermotard 939, the 950 is 4.5kg lighter, thanks mainly to Ducati shaving 1.5kg off the engine, building a frame with tapered tubing and adding some lighter parts.

Combine that with the extra four horsepower Ducati managed to squeeze out with new pistons and new exhaust valve timing, and

you've got power that catapults you out of corners and which stretches well into 8,000rpm territory as you click your way through the six-speed gearbox.

Just to make sure the front wheel gets some time on the tarmac, the Hypermotard 950 is equipped with three riding modes. As expected, Sport unleashes all 114 horsepower in a rush, ensuring lots of fun and some butt-clenching moments when we got too throttle-happy on the narrow mountain roads.

Touring lets you access the same power, but in a less aggressive manner. Urban dials down the power to 75bhp and turns up all the electronic nannies. Not surprisingly, it is also the go-to mode when it is wet.

As expected from a bike of this calibre, anti-lock braking is standard issue. The Bosch Cornering ABS comes with three settings: 1 has a Slide by Brake function that gives the rider freedom to slide the rear tyre at will, 2 offers a more sedate ride, while 3 caters to those of a certain vintage.

Adjustable Marzocchi forks and a Sachs shock absorber add to the riding experience, while the new under-seat twin pipes provide the perfect soundtrack.

All this action is easier to manage, thanks to a more comfortable riding position. The 950 sports a wider handlebar, slimmer sides and a flatter seat – as well as dignity-preserving electronic features like Ducati Traction Control Evo and Ducati Wheelie Control.

If all this is too tame for you, perhaps you should fork out a little more for the Hypermotard 950 SP. Identifiable by the splash of white on the red paintwork, the SP is slightly lighter and equipped with



SPECS / DUCATI HYPERMOTARD 950
Price: \$39,900 with COE
Engine: 937cc 4-valve L-twin cylinder liquid cooled
Transmission: Six-speed manual with chain-drive
Power: 114bhp at 9,000rpm
Torque: 96Nm at 7,250rpm
0-100kmh: 3 seconds
Top speed: Over 245kmh
Fuel consumption: 5.1 litres/100km
Agent: Wearnes Automotive

A stoppie done on the Hypermotard 950 SP, where the rider yanks on the front brake. PHOTO: DUCATI

forged Marchesini wheels and Ohlins suspension. Not surprisingly, it is also more responsive and has three more degrees of lean angle than the 950's 44 degrees.

Ducati need not have bothered with the wheelie control software here. People who opt for the SP are quite capable of going on one wheel on their own.

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• The writer contributes occasionally to Life.



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MeAndMyCar

Like riding a magic carpet

That was how it felt when Larry Lim drove his Bentley R-Type Continental 3,800km from Sydney to York in Western Australia

Andre Lam

Retired businessman Larry Lim, who turned 77 last year, remembers the exact year he fell in love with the Bentley R-Type Continental.

It was 1953, when he was 12 and browsing car magazines at bookshops in Bras Basah Road.

"The car that had made the greatest impression on me back then was the Bentley," he says. "In 2001, I finally acquired my dream car from a collector in Sydney."

Just a couple of years after buying it, he drove his prized possession 3,800km from Sydney to York, a town in Western Australia, to attend the 2003 Rolls-Royce Federal Rally.

"The drive was remarkably trouble free, effortless and very smooth like a magic carpet, just like the magazine reviews said," he recalls.

After a rebuild that took two years, he promptly took the Bentley on a 4,000km cross-continent rally called "Coast to Coast" from Fremantle in Western Australia to Ter-rigal in New South Wales.

Mr Lim worked in the motor industry in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1984, he left to start a supermarket business in Papua New Guinea. It evolved into a wholesale business, then a travel agency and even a hotel. He was also Singapore's honorary-consul general for Papua New Guinea from 1994 till 2002.

He said he chose to retire, both from business and his consular work, to "explore the world" with his wife, Daisy, 75, "while we are still fit and able".

They met at a party in 1964, married in 1967 and have three grown-up daughters.

"My first car was a pre-owned 1956 VW Beetle, which I shared with my late brother when I got my driving licence in 1963," Mr Lim says.

Over the years, he has owned a



Mr Larry Lim fell in love with the Bentley R-Type Continental in 1953 when he was 12 and browsing car magazines at bookshops in Bras Basah Road. PHOTOS: MECCANICO STUDIO

number of classics, including a 1963 Lotus Elite, 1963 Mercedes 230SL, 1969 Volvo P1800 B20 Sports, 1968 Alfa Romeo 1600 Boat Tail Sports, 1969 Alfa GTV 2000, 1975 Alfasud, 1965 Lancia Fulvia, 1967 Honda S600/S800cc Sports, 1974 Ferrari 365 GT4 and a 1960 Austin Frogeyed Sprite.

His current collection has been distilled to just four cars – a 1926 Rolls-Royce Twenty Connaught Tourer, 1939 Bentley 4 1/4 Litre Vanden Plas Drophead Coupe, 1970 Rolls-Royce Corniche Convertible

and the 1953 Bentley R-Type Continental Coupe.

The last ride is his favourite. "It is gorgeous looking, easy to drive and able to keep up with today's traffic," he says.

Only 208 Bentley R-Type Continentals were made and even fewer remain today. Mr Lim believes his is the only one in this region.

"I would have liked to own a pre-World War I Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost or W O Bentley Speed Six," he says. "But it is now too late as prices have skyrocketed."

He is not averse to modern cars and has a Mercedes-Benz ML350, which he plans to replace with a BMW X5 to take part in the 2019 London to Singapore Rally.

"In January 2020, I plan to ship my trusty Toyota Land Cruiser to South America and drive 23,000km in 100 days," he adds.

stlife@sph.com.sg

• The writer contributes to Torque, a motoring monthly published by SPH Magazines.



What's in the boot?

- Jerry can for spare petrol
- Spare tyre inner tube
- Car cover
- Umbrella

FastLane



Mazda celebrates MX-5's 30 years with new edition

Mazda has launched the 30th-anniversary edition of its MX-5 (left). Wearing a unique Racing Orange and limited to just 3,000 units, the car will be available globally. It features forged aluminium Rays wheels and a 30th-anniversary badge displaying the model's serial number. Other unique features include orange brake calipers and Brembo front brakes.



PHOTOS: AUDI, MAZDA, NISSAN, SKODA, VANDERHALL, VOLKSWAGEN

Styling tweaks for Audi's TT RS

Audi's latest TT RS (above) retains its unique five-cylinder power plant and comes with subtle styling tweaks. Its 2.5TFSI engine with 400hp and 480Nm of torque sends

the car to 100kmh in 3.7 seconds and a top speed of 279kmh. A new front end and redesigned rear wing with side winglets are the most obvious cosmetic changes.

Christopher Tan

Volkswagen to launch fully electric buggy

Volkswagen will unveil its first fully electric buggy (right) next month. Taking its cues from popular American dune buggies, the concept vehicle is based on VW's modular electric drive matrix platform. The concept of the fully electric buggy is based on the historical predecessors that found their home in California. Back then, the chassis of the Beetle served as the basis.



A Skoda with power and practicality

Skoda's Octavia vRS Challenge (left) is for those who want power and practicality.

Powered by a 2-litre turbocharged engine making 245hp, the car is available in both hatch and estate forms.

It features a comprehensive specification list that builds on already generous equipment levels of the standard model.

It also comes with a host of striking design features, including 19-inch Xtreme black alloy wheels; sports exhaust with black trim; black folding, auto-dimming door mirrors and black vRS badging.

New BMW plug-in hybrid 7-series

BMW will soon offer a new version of its plug-in hybrid 7-series limousine. The BMW 745e, the long version BMW 745Le and the BMW 745Le xDrive with extended wheelbase and intelligent all-wheel-drive boast a plug-in hybrid system paired with their inline-six petrol engines. Electric propulsion is powered by a new battery pack that is more powerful and long-lasting.

Partially automated driving with Passat

Volkswagen's new Passat will feature the Travel Assist function, which allows for partially automated driving at up to 210kmh. The eighth-generation Passat will be the first Volkswagen that is capable of partially automated driving. Other functions include Emergency Steering Assist, which increases safety during evasive manoeuvres by means of braking interventions.



A jazzed-up Qashqai

Nissan's new Qashqai N-Motion (above) is a jazzed-up version of the brand's best-selling crossover. Sporting styling tweaks and a seven-speed dual-clutch transmission, it is first available as a 115hp 1.5-litre turbodiesel found commonly in Renault cars. Additional equipment includes panoramic glass roof, silver bumper plates, roof rails, mirror caps and 19-inch alloys.

Three-wheeled roadsters

Two roadsters from Vanderhall Motor Works' four-model range were presented this week – a two-seat Venice (right) and a single-seat Venice Speedster. Both three-wheeler models are powered through the front wheels by a 1.4-litre turbocharged four-cylinder engine carrying body weighing just 624kg. With a phenomenal power-to-weight ratio, the Vanderhall Venice delivers 185bhp via a six-speed sequential gearbox, with a 0-100kmh sprint time of around 4.8 seconds and a top speed of 225kmh.





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Home-grown conductor's US debut

Singaporean Wong Kah Chun likens conducting the New York Philharmonic to driving a Rolls-Royce

Nirmal Ghosh
US Bureau Chief in New York

It is a Tuesday morning backstage at the David Geffen Hall in the Lincoln Centre in New York City. And Wong Kah Chun stands in the wings as the orchestra tunes up. He has his score and baton. The sound then dies abruptly, disappearing into a few seconds of perfect stillness.

Then, the maestro walks on, the great doors are shut behind him and, barely minutes later, comes the sound of the New York Philharmonic in soaring full flight at the hands of its first Singaporean conductor.

Much later, Wong emerges into the Green Room with a big smile, after the second rehearsal for the orchestra's annual Chinese New Year concert to be staged the next day.

"What an orchestra," he exclaims. "Now the work is over and we can just enjoy ourselves."

The New York Philharmonic is one of the world's top orchestras. The David Geffen Hall has been its home since 1962, when its musical director was the late, legendary Leonard Bernstein.

Wong, 32, is principal conductor of Germany's Nuremberg Symphony Orchestra. He divides his time between conducting orchestras across the world from Europe to Japan, and Project Infindude, which he started with Marina Mahler, granddaughter of composer Gustav Mahler.

The project is an art initiative embracing children with special needs in under-served communities, which launched a year-long programme with the Singapore non-profit Child at Street II.

Wong is most nervous not before

the performance, but the first rehearsal with an orchestra whose musicians he has never met, he tells The Straits Times. But he quickly felt at ease in New York, he says.

"In the first rehearsal, within the first two minutes, I could already feel so much response from the orchestra," he says.

He adds: "One look, one little gesture and I got immediate feedback in terms of the sound that I wish. I don't have to talk. I don't have to verbalise my thoughts. They reacted absolutely the way I wanted it to be. This is special."

"The concert for me is the fun part," he says. "It's a celebration. It's not work. It's where everyone comes in. We are performing, we are celebrating the event. For me, this is the highlight. This is why I am a musician, why I am a performer."

The highlight of the performance on Wednesday, which marked Wong's debut in the United States, was Stravinsky's suite from The Firebird (1919).

The programme included Queen Of The Night's aria from Mozart's The Magic Flute featuring outstanding South Korean soloist So Young Park, who also sang the traditional Korean Shin Arirang.

In keeping with the Chinese New Year theme was the US premiere of Chinese composer Tan Dun's violin concerto, Fire Ritual: A Musical Ritual For Victims Of War.

Tan, a contemporary classical composer and conductor, is perhaps best known for his scores of the martial arts movies Hero (2002) and Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (2000).

The intricate Fire Ritual features a wistful violin solo played by the fiery yet sublimely sensitive Korean, Bomsori Kim, amid the musical expression of piping birds, creating a sense of space. Her violin wove the parts of the piece into a rich, sombre yet muscular flow.

The 2,738-seat David Geffen Hall was a near sellout on a cold and rainy night and the performance



got a standing ovation and cheers as Wong spoke greetings in Korean and Mandarin.

For Wong, who knew from a young age that he wanted to be a musician, the New York Philharmonic is undoubtedly special.

Wong does not know how to drive, he says, as he sits at a Steinway grand piano in the Green Room. But he can imagine what it must be like to drive a Rolls-Royce, he says with a smile.

And that is what conducting the New York Philharmonic is, he tells the orchestra at the rehearsal.

Wong Kah Chun conducting the New York Philharmonic during a Chinese New Year concert at the David Geffen Hall on Wednesday. PHOTO: CHRIS LEE

The world is his stage



SCAN TO WATCH



<http://str.sg/wongkahchun>



I toured the home of master potter Iskandar Jalil.

Toh Wen Li
Journalist
The Straits Times



Journalism goes beyond the 24-hour news cycle of current affairs. I have journeyed through the homes of artists and discovered the muse of Singapore's greatest creative minds. As a journalist, you never know what to expect at work. If you're inspired by the spirit of discovery, come take the path less travelled.





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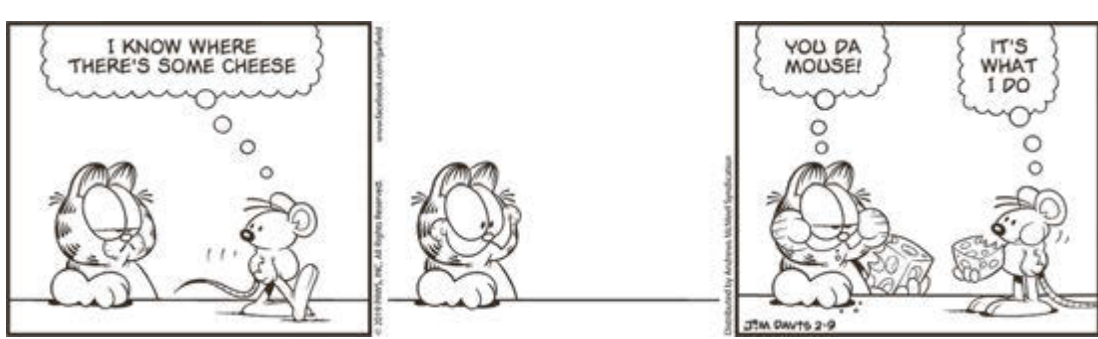


Comics

BABY BLUES



GARFIELD



Free to air

CHANNEL 5

AM
6.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
6.40 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (V)
7.00 The Dr Oz Show 8 (HD) (PG) (IE)
8.00 On The Red Dot – Risky Business (CA)
8.30 Wheel Of Fortune 35 (HD) (V)
9.30 Secret Meat Business (IE)
10.00 Euromaxx (Cul)
10.30 Arts 21 (PG) (Cul)
11.00 Worst Cooks In America 7 – Celebrity Edition (HD) (PG) (IE)
PM
12.00 Discover Kansai: Exploring Kyoto, Nara And Osaka By Train (V)
12.30 Films & Stars (PG) (V)
1.00 America's Got Talent 12 (HD) (PG) (V)
3.00 Little Big Shots: Forever Young (PG) (V)
4.00 Make You Laugh Out Loud 3 (PG) (V)
5.00 Designer In The House 2 (V)
5.30 Divided (US) (HD) (V)
6.00 Hungry For Love (V)
6.30 The Simpsons 29 (HD) (PG) (SC)
7.00 Cine On 5: Zookeeper (PG) (M)
9.00 News Tonight (HD)
9.30 The Strangest Weather On Earth 2 (HD) (CC) (IE)
10.00 Scary Scary Saturday: The Boy (PG13) (M)
AM
12.00 The Shannara Chronicles (D)
12.50 Grimm 5 (PG13) (D)
2.30 Timeless (PG) (D)
3.20 Worst Cooks In America 7 – Celebrity Edition (PG) (IE)
4.20 Wheel Of Fortune 35 (HD) (V)
5.10 The Dr Oz Show 8 (HD) (PG) (IE)

CHANNEL 8

AM
6.00 Neighbourhood Chef 2 (HD) (V)
7.00 Portrait Of Home 2 (D)
9.00 Smart Kid (S)
9.30 Firerobo (S)
10.00 The Adv Of Little Carp (S)
10.30 All New Jackie Chan Adventures (S)
11.00 The Love 97.2 Breakfast Quartet 2 (CC) (V)
PM
12.00 Please Be My Guest! 2 (CC) (V)
1.00 Golden Age Talentime (CC) (V)

2.00 Challenge The Impossible 2 (V)
4.00 My Star Guide 13 (HD) (V)
4.30 Beyond Words (PG) (CC) (D)
6.30 Singapore Today (News)
7.00 Spring Flower (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 News Tonight
10.30 Saturday Cinema: From Vegas To Macau 3 (PG) (CC) (M)
AM
12.50 My Amazing Bride (PG) (CC) (D)
2.50 Behind Every Job (IE)
3.45 The Ten Deadly Sins (PG13) (D)
4.10 The Deer And The Cauldron (HD) (PG) (D)

CHANNEL U

AM
10.00 Shake It Up (V)
11.30 Project W (IE)
PM
12.30 Deluxe-licious (CC) (V)
1.30 World Food (CC) (IE)
2.30 Artistic Journeys (IE)
3.00 Golden Rainbow (PG) (CC) (D)
5.00 Lady With Class (PG) (CC) (D)
7.00 Puzzle Masters (V)
9.00 The Entertainer (PG) (CC) (D)
11.00 News Tonight
11.30 Puzzle Masters (V)
AM
1.30 Lord Of Shanghai (PG) (CC) (D)
2.30 Close

CNA

AM
6.00 Singapore Tonight
7.00 News Now
7.30 Correspondents' Diary
8.00 News Now
8.30 This Weekend
9.00 News Now
9.30 Asia Business First Weekend
10.02 Insight
11.00 News Now
11.30 Conversation With
PM
12.00 News Now
12.30 The Making Of Singapore On Film
1.02 Conversation With
1.30 Super Octogenarians
2.00 News Now
2.30 This Weekend
3.00 News Now
3.30 Asia Business First Weekend

4.02 Insight
5.00 News Now
5.30 The Making Of Singapore On Film
6.00 News Now
6.30 This Weekend
7.02 Japan Hour (English Subtitles)
8.00 Primetime Asia
8.30 Correspondents' Diary
9.02 Trump's Showdown (CC)
10.00 Singapore Tonight
10.30 Money Mind
11.02 Japan Hour (English Subtitles)
AM
12.00 News Now
12.30 Conversation With
1.02 Correspondents' Diary
1.30 Money Mind
2.00 News Now
2.30 The Making Of Singapore On Film
3.02 Insight
4.00 News Now
4.30 Money Mind
5.02 Wild City

Programmes may be pre-empted by breaking news

VASANTHAM

PM
1.00 Thenum Paalum (PG) (M)
4.00 Ram-Leela (PG) (M)
7.00 Thirai Express (CC) (V)
8.00 Vera Level (CC) (IE)
8.30 Tamil Seithi (News)
9.00 Kollywood Music (V)
10.00 Junga (PG13) (M)

AM
1.00 Tamil Seithi (News) (R)
1.30 Close

OKTO

AM
7.00 Tip The Mouse (P)
8.00 Let's Go Pocoyo (P)
8.30 Wissper (HD) (P)
9.00 Littlest Pet Shop (S)
9.30 Metalions (S)
10.00 Pokemon The Series: Sun And Moon (S)
10.30 Smurfs (HD) (S)
11.00 Lego Ninjago 9 – Hunted (S)
11.30 Extreme Football (S)
PM
12.00 Totally Totto (HD) (S)
12.30 Exlosers 2 (D)

1.00 Loud House (S)
1.30 Jane And The Dragon (S)
2.00 Inazuma Eleven (S)
2.30 The Deep (HD) (CC) (S)
3.00 Future Card Buddyfight (HD) (S)
3.30 CardFight!! Vanguard G: Next (HD) (CC) (S)
4.00 Bear Grylls Survival School (HD) (PG) (CC) (S)
4.30 Loud House (S)
5.00 Jane And The Dragon (S)
5.30 Inazuma Eleven (S)
6.00 Basic Mini-tary Training (S)
6.30 Museum Mysteries (S)
7.00 The Deep (HD) (CC) (S)
7.30 Future Card Buddyfight (HD) (S)
8.00 CardFight!! Vanguard G: Next (HD) (CC) (S)
8.30 Bear Grylls Survival School (HD) (PG) (CC) (S)
9.00 Sportsmax (HD) (Sports)
9.30 Whacked Out Sports (PG) (CC) (V)
10.00 ONE Championship 2018/19: Global Heroes (Manila) (PG13) (Sports)
AM
1.05 Close

SURIA

PM
3.00 Juara Memasak Milenia (CC) (V)
4.00 Tiket Cinta (PG) (CC) (Telemovie)
6.00 Tahu Nahu (S)
6.30 Kerjayaan Wanita: 8 Wanita Singapura 2014 (CC) (IE)
7.00 Jenayah Tersembunyi (PG) (CC) (IE)
7.30 Resipi Rahsia 2 (CC) (IE)
8.00 Berita (HD) (News)
8.30 Sepahtu Reunion Live 2 (CC) (V)
9.30 Setia Menunggumu (PG) (CC) (D)
10.30 Extreme Roadtrip (IE)
11.00 Detik (PG) (CA)
11.30 Berita (HD) (News) (R)
AM
12.00 Close

C: Children; CA: Current Affairs; CC: Closed Captions; Cul: Culture; D: Drama; IE: Info-Ed; M: Movies; P: Preschool; PG: Parental Guidance; R: Repeat; S: Schoolkids; SC: Sitcom; V: Variety

Programme schedules correct at time of printing. Telecast details from Mediacorp, StarHub and Singtel TV. For pay TV updates, go to www.starhub.com/tv or www.singtelv.com.sg

TheStarsSay

Aries (March 21 - April 19)

Indulge in something stimulating. A cultural event or a good book can give you what you need.

Taurus (April 20 - May 20)

Someone wants you to drop everything and buy him what he needs or do what he says, but you should not.

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)

Make the most of your social network. See if people need something or if they are up to anything cool.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)

Stay calm. Things are getting a bit weird, but your reaction should help others see what to do.

Leo (July 23 - Aug 22)

Your great flexibility and energy help you find new ways to take care of business, so make the most of it.

Virgo (Aug 23 - Sept 22)

You know what you need to do, but you are not sure how to get there. Seek help from trusted people.

Libra (Sept 23 - Oct 22)

Big groups can be fun, but your best bet is to stick with one-on-one business for important results.

Scorpio (Oct 23 - Nov 21)

Consider your health. Make a wellness check-up appointment or take a step towards a healthier life.

Sagittarius (Nov 22 - Dec 21)

Let your inner child loose. Your energy is right for letting your creative spirit soar.

Capricorn (Dec 22 - Jan 19)

Safety is on your mind and you have what it takes to lock down the emergency drill.

Aquarius (Jan 20 - Feb 18)

You learn new things at a prodigious rate and your discoveries keep you alert to new possibilities.

Pisces (Feb 19 - March 20)

Something is not right and you need to fix it. Help people to see the difference between fake and real.

• Provided by Astrology.com (www.astrology.com)

Radio

KISS92 (TODAY)

AM
6.00 Desiree Lai
PM
12.00 Charmaine Yee
8.00 Jill Lim

KISS92 (TOMORROW)

AM
6.00 American Top 40 With Ryan Seacrest
PM
12.00 Jill Lim

ONE FM 91.3 (TODAY)

AM
6.00 Cheryl Miles
PM
12.00 Harry Corro

ONE FM 91.3 (TOMORROW)

PM
12.00 Harry Corro

MONEY FM 89.3 (WEEKENDS)

AM
7.00 Weekend Mornings With Jason Dasey

Tides

SUN RISE/SET TIME: 7:17am/7:21pm
MOON RISE/SET TIME: 10:20am/10:40pm

TIDES TODAY: Singapore: 1.56am (2.8m), 7.37am (1.2m), 1.30pm (3m), 8.03pm (0.7m). Desaru: 1.43am (2.7m), 7.22am (1.5m), 1.07pm (2.6m), 7.26pm (1m). Port Dickson: 3.34am (0.3m), 9.06am (2.4m), 3.38pm (0.3m), 9.25pm (2.5m). Mersing: 1.15am (3m), 7.16am (1.6m), 12.46pm (2.5m), 6.45pm (1.2m).

TIDES TOMORROW: Singapore: 2.20am (2.8m), 8.09am (1.2m), 2.03pm (2.9m), 8.26pm (0.8m). Desaru: 2.07am (2.7m), 7.54am (1.4m), 1.48pm (2.5m), 7.58pm (1.1m). Port Dickson: 4.01am (0.4m), 9.35am (2.3m), 3.56pm (0.3m), 9.53pm (2.5m). Mersing: 1.40am (2.9m), 7.41am (1.6m), 1.27pm (2.5m), 7.15pm (1.4m).

For updates and more details, call Meteorological Service Singapore, NEA, on 6542-7788 or go to www.nea.gov.sg

StarHub TV

HISTORY (CHANNEL 401)

AM
9.30 Swamp Mysteries With Troy Landry
10.25 Alone 4
11.20 JFK Declassified: Tracking Oswald
PM
12.15 Hunting ISIS
1.10 Mountain Men 7
2.05 Swamp Mysteries With Troy Landry
3.00 Alone 4
3.55 Head To Head
4.25 The Pickers 9
5.20 Road Hawks
6.15 Counting Cars 7
7.10 Pawn Stars 18
7.35 Storage Wars 12
8.05 History Drama: Project Blue Book
9.00 The Curse Of Oak Island 5
9.55 The Pickers 13

LIFETIME (CHANNEL 514)

AM
9.00 Married At First Sight Australia 4
PM
12.00 Born This Way 2
1.00 This Time Next Year
1.55 The Lost Wife Of Robert Durst
3.30 I'll Be Watching
5.05 Gok's Fill Your House For Free
6.00 Married At First Sight US 5
9.00 Arranged 2
10.00 I Killed My BFF: Preacher's Daughter
11.35 My Haunted House 3

HBO (CHANNEL 601)

AM
8.35 Fantastic Mr. Fox
10.00 All The Money In The World (NC16)
PM
12.10 Dunkirk
1.55 Alice Through The Looking Glass
3.45 Race To Witch Mountain
5.25 Inkheart
7.10 Pacific Rim: Uprising (NC16)
9.00 The 15:17 To Paris (NC16)
10.30 True Detective 3 (NC16)
11.30 Ready Player One (NC16)

CINEMAX (CHANNEL 611)

AM
8.45 The Negotiator
11.00 Strike Back 6 (NC16)
PM
12.00 The Core
2.10 Mission To Mars (PG)
4.00 Hulk
6.15 Star Wars: Episode V – The Empire Strikes Back
8.20 Looking Glass (NC16)
10.00 Strike Back 6 (NC16)
11.00 Patriots Day (NC16)

HUB E CITY (CHANNEL 825)

AM
7.00 Hot Door Night Chinese New Year Special (Part 2) (HD)

9.00 Noble Aspirations (HD)
10.00 2nd Soribada K-Music Awards (HD)
PM
1.00 Mr Player 7 (HD)
3.00 Singer 2019 (HD)
5.00 I Am The Actor (HD)
7.00 Perfect Match 6 (HD)
8.45 Wok Of Love (HD)
11.00 Happy Camp 2 (HD)

HUB SPORTS 1 (CHANNEL 201)

AM
9.30 FEI Equestrian World 2019
10.00 Multi Sport: Action Sports World 2018
11.00 ISU Four Continents Figure Skating Championships 2019: Ladies' Free Skating
PM
3.00 Tennis: Deuce 2019
3.30 Tennis: ATP World Tour Uncovered 2019
4.00 Multi Sport: Fise World Series Highlights 2017 Recap: Beyond The Ramps
5.00 Extreme Sports: World Surf League 2018: Billabong Pipe Masters Highlights
6.00 Motorsports: FIA World RallyCross Championship 2018 Round 9 Latvia Highlights
7.00 BMX Supercross 2017: Lane 1 – Show 1
7.30 BMX Supercross 2017: Lane 1 – Show 2
8.00 Tennis: Fed Cup By BNP Paribas 2019 First Round Czech Republic v Romania: Day 1

HUB SPORTS 2 (CHANNEL 202)

AM
7.00 National Basketball League Round 17 Sydney Kings Vs Melbourne United
9.00 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Hong Kong Eastern Vs San Miguel Alab Pilipinas
11.00 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
11.30 National Basketball League Round 17 Cairns Taipans Vs Brisbane Bullets (Live)
PM
1.30 Fiba World Basketball 2019
2.00 Football: EFL Championship 2018 Matchday 31 Aston Villa Vs Sheffield United
4.00 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Mono Vampire Vs CLS Knights Indonesia (Live)
6.00 Wrestling: WWE Bottomline (PG)
7.00 Football: Coppa Italia 2018/19 Highlights
7.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
8.00 Wrestling: WWE Afterburn (PG)
9.00 National Basketball League Round 17 Cairns Taipans Vs Brisbane Bullets
10.55 Football: EFL Championship 2018 Matchday 31 Nottingham Forest Vs Brentford (Live)
AM
1.00 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
1.25 Football: EFL Championship 2018 Matchday 31 Stoke City Vs West Bromwich Albion (Live)
3.30 Wrestling: WWE Bottomline (PG)
4.30 National Basketball League Round 17 New Zealand Breakers Vs Adelaide 36ers

Singtel TV

CARTOON NETWORK (CHANNEL 226)

AM
6.00 Oggy & The Cockroaches
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
7.55 The Heroic Quest Of The Valiant Prince Ivandoe
8.00 Running Man Animation
9.00 Teen Titans Go!
9.30 Transformers: Cyberverse
10.00 Apple & Onion
10.30 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
11.00 OK K.O.! Let's Be Heroes
11.30 Ben 10

PM
12.00 Unikitty
12.30 The Amazing World Of Gumball
1.00 Craig Of The Creek
1.30 Running Man Animation
2.00 We Bare Bears
2.30 The Powerpuff Girls
3.00 Summer Camp Island
3.30 Supernobots
4.00 Ben 10
4.30 Cloudy With A Chance Of Meatballs
5.00 Transformers: Cyberverse
5.30 Teen Titans Go!
6.00 OK K.O.! Let's Be Heroes
6.30 Ben 10
7.00 Craig Of The Creek
8.00 Running Man Animation
9.00 Oggy & The Cockroaches
9.30 We Bare Bears
10.00 Regular Show
10.30 Steven Universe
11.00 Clarence
11.30 Adventure Time

AXN (HD) (CHANNEL 304)

AM
6.00 Supernatural 14
6.50 The Amazing Race 29
9.25 MacGyver 3
10.15 White House Down
PM

12.45 Asia's Got Talent 3
2.35 The Karate Kid (2010)
5.15 Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle
7.25 Team Ninja Warrior 2
9.05 MacGyver 3
10.00 Hawaii Five-0 9
10.55 The Blacklist 6
11.50 Asia's Got Talent 3

WARNER TV (HD) (CHANNEL 306)

AM
6.00 Major Crimes 5

6.45 Race To The Scene
7.30 The Carbonaro Effect
7.55 Pan
9.55 Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix
PM
12.25 The Lord Of The Rings: The Fellowship Of The Ring
3.40 The Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers
6.55 Jack The Giant Slayer
9.00 Blindspot 4
9.50 Superman Returns

COMEDY CENTRAL ASIA (HD) (CHANNEL 324)

AM
6.00 The Reaction Hall Of Fame
7.35 Super Ultimate Candid Camera
8.10 Mr Bean
9.10 Just For Laughs Gags 14
9.35 The Relationship Show
10.25 I Live With Models
11.20 The Daily Show 24
11.50 Lip Sync Battle 2
PM
12.35 The Goldbergs 5
1.25 Hot In Cleveland 6
2.10 Above Average Presents
2.15 Saturday Night Live 43
3.05 The Comedy Jam
3.55 The Goldbergs 5
4.45 Hot In Cleveland 6
5.35 Saturday Night Live 43
6.25 Amazingness
7.15 Comedy Central Roast Of David Hasselhoff
8.25 The Burn With Jeff Ross 2
8.50 Above Average Presents
9.00 Hasan Minhaj Goatface
9.35 Inglorious Pranksters
10.00 Saturday Night Live 44
10.40 Hasan Minhaj Goatface
11.25 Inglorious Pranksters
11.35 Inside Amy Schumer 2

JIA LE (HD) (CHANNEL 502)

AM
6.00 Stylish Man
7.00 Super Nightclub
8.30 Top Singers
10.00 All Out Of Love
PM
12.00 Stylish Man
1.00 Super Nightclub
2.30 All Out Of Love
4.30 Top Singers
6.00 Stylish Man
7.00 All Out Of Love
9.00 The Legend Of Golden Music
10.00 Glorious World
10.30 The Golden Melodies 2018

Bieber, Baldwin stayed celibate before wedding

NEW YORK • Newlywed celebrity couple Justin Bieber and Hailey Baldwin disclosed that they remained celibate before their surprise wedding last year, as they opened up about their relationship and marriage in an interview with Vogue magazine.

Canadian singer-songwriter Bieber, who turns 25 next month, married model and TV presenter Baldwin, 22, last September after a three-month romance. The couple are still finalising plans for a wedding ceremony.

According to Vogue, Bieber and Baldwin first met in 2009 – at a Today show where she had been given tickets by her uncle, actor Alec Baldwin.

They were connected through the friendship of Baldwin's father and Bieber's mother, but there was little enthusiasm between the youngsters initially.

Baldwin denied that she was a huge fan of Bieber. They did not develop a real friendship until they met again at a church in New York a few years later.

They dated briefly three years ago, but according to Vogue, the relationship did not end well, as both sides hinted at "betrayal", which the Vogue report did not elaborate. Bieber was involved in an on-off relationship with pop singer Selena Gomez between 2010 and March last year.

Bieber and Baldwin rekindled their romance after running into each other again in June last year. They got engaged within a month.

When the couple reconnected in June, Bieber had been in self-imposed celibacy for more than a year, according to Vogue. He had what he calls "a legitimate problem with sex", said the report.

There were speculations that their whirlwind marriage was because she was pregnant, but it was

denied in the Vogue interview.

In fact, Baldwin said the couple have no plans to have children for at least a few years.

Bieber admitted that the wish to have sex was a reason they got married, but clarified that it was not the only reason.

"When I saw her last June, I just forgot how much I loved her and how much I missed her and how much of a positive impact she made on my life," he was quoted as saying in the Vogue report.

Baldwin admitted in the interview that "marriage is very hard". "It's really effing hard," she said.

She said that she felt lonely and homesick in the first weeks of marriage, even though she had not lived with her parents in five years.

She also found herself the target of Bieber's fans, and many people on social media were also not optimistic about their marriage.

"I prayed to feel peace about the decision, and that's where I landed," she said in the Vogue interview. "I love him very much. I have loved him for a long time."

The Vogue report says healthy communication is a challenge for the couple, as they argued over decisions like decorations.

"Fighting is good," Bieber was quoted as saying in Vogue. "We don't want to lose each other. We don't want to say the wrong thing."

Baldwin clarified in the Vogue interview that she is "fighting to do this the right way, to build a healthy relationship".

She added that she and Bieber were still learning in the marriage, and they remained committed to grow together and support each other.

"At the end of the day, too, he's my best friend. I never get sick of him," she said.

"And you're my baby boo," Bieber grinned in reply.



Pink receiving a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in California. The singer will receive the Outstanding Contribution to Music Award at this year's Brit Awards. PHOTO: REUTERS

Pop star Pink to be honoured at Brit Awards

LONDON • Pop star Pink will receive the Outstanding Contribution to Music Award at this year's Brit Awards, organisers of Britain's pop music honours said on Thursday, naming the American singer-songwriter as the first international artist to receive the prize.

The Grammy Award winner, known for chart-topping hits such as Raise Your Glass, Just Like A Pill and What About Us, joins the likes of David Bowie, Elton John, Queen and the Spice Girls in receiving the award.

"Since the beginning of my career, the British fans have been some of the most fierce and loyal in the world," she said in a statement. "I am humbled to receive this hon-

our and be in the company of an illustrious group of British icons."

She will also close the show at the Feb 20 event, which will be held in London. Singers Anne-Marie, Dua Lipa and Jess Glynne are among the nominees for this year's awards.

Pink, 39, was also honoured with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame earlier this week.

"I feel like I'm dreaming and if anyone pinches me, I'm gonna punch them in the left eyebrow," the singer said at the ceremony on Tuesday, surrounded by her husband and two children.

"I feel like a lot of people probably only thought I would make it to the walk of shame, but here I am," the singer-songwriter added.

Pink, whose real name is Alecia Moore, reflected on her beginnings in the music industry, paying tribute to her father who, she said, encouraged her to pursue her dreams.

"Today for me is a celebration of something that my dad taught me and that is – to thine own self be true," she said.

"There is a power in believing in yourself, there is a power in not giving up on life and not giving up on yourself," she added.

Pink has received 20 Grammy nominations and three wins over her career. She will be vying for another Grammy on Monday morning, Singapore time, for best pop vocal album for Beautiful Trauma. Since her debut in 2000, she has re-

leased seven studio albums and has sold more than 50 million records.

Pink got her start in the music business as a member of the girl group Choice and her career took off after that. She released her first solo album Can't Take Me Home in 2000, with the record certified double-platinum in the United States.

She received her first Grammy in 2002 for Lady Marmalade, which was on the soundtrack for the film Moulin Rouge (2001).

Her two other Grammys were for best female rock vocal performance for Trouble in 2004 and in 2011, she shared the award for best pop collaboration with vocals for the song Imagine.

REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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On social media

WILL ARIANA PERFORM?: Pop star Ariana Grande may not perform at the Grammy Awards after she accused Grammy producer Ken Ehrlich of "lying" about why she is not taking the stage on Monday morning, Singapore time.

"I've kept my mouth shut but now you're lying about me," Grande wrote on Twitter, posting a screenshot of an Associated Press report in which Ehrlich said that she "felt it was too late for her to pull something together".

"I can pull together a performance overnight and you know that, Ken," she wrote. "It was when my creativity & self expression was stifled by you, that I decided not to attend. I hope the show is exactly what you want it to be and more."

The 25-year-old singer continued on Twitter, "I offered 3 different songs. it's about collaboration. it's about feeling supported. it's about art and honesty. not politics. not doing favors or playing games. it's just a game y'all. and i'm sorry but that's not what music is to me."

Grande is up for two Grammys this year – best pop solo performance for God Is A Woman and best pop vocal album for Sweetener.

The public disagreement raises the possibility that she will be absent from the ceremony.

PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Woody Allen suing Amazon over movie deal

NEW YORK • Film-maker Woody Allen has filed a US\$68 million (S\$92 million) suit against Amazon for breach of contract, accusing the streaming giant of cancelling a film deal because of a "baseless" decades-old allegation that he sexually abused his daughter.

Allen says Amazon sought to terminate the deal in June, and has since refused to pay him US\$9 million in financing for his latest film, A Rainy Day In New York, his lawyers at Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan allege.

That film was one of several to be produced with the Oscar-winning director under a series of agreements reached after Allen made the Crisis In Six Scenes programme for Amazon, which was then a new content provider.

He is seeking that US\$9 million along with minimum guarantees owed him for other films, totalling "in excess of US\$68,000,000", ac-

cording to a complaint filed on Thursday in federal court in New York and obtained by Agence France-Presse.

Allen says Amazon told him the deal had become "impracticable" because of "supervening events, including renewed allegations against Mr Allen, his own controversial comments" and the refusal of actors to work with him.

The four-time Oscar-winning director said he asked for details of these "accusations" and "statements", to no avail.

Allen claims Amazon's unilateral termination of the contract forced him and his production company Gravier Productions to drop "highly recognised individuals" whom he had hired.

Allen has been accused of molesting Dylan Farrow, his adopted daughter, when she was seven years old in the early 1990s. He was cleared of the charges, first levelled

by his then partner Mia Farrow, after two separate months-long investigations, and has steadfastly denied the abuse. But Dylan, now an adult, maintains she was molested.

In June last year, the same month that Amazon apparently terminated his contract, Allen backed the #MeToo movement against sexual harassment – and said he should be its poster boy.

"I've worked in movies for 50 years, I've worked with hundreds of actresses, and not a single one has ever suggested any kind of impropriety at all," he said in an interview with Argentina's Canal 13 television network. "I – who was only accused by one woman in a child custody case, which was looked at and proven to be untrue – I get lumped in with these people."

Others, however, think the authorities never established the authenticity of the charges against him. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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By SAKARI KUIKKA

For Singapore to remain relevant in this highly globalised and competitive environment, businesses need to continuously innovate and use their resources more effectively.

The manufacturing industry in Singapore – which contributes about 20 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) and 14 per cent of total

employment – is being impacted by new technologies, changes in global supply chains and consumer demands. Local manufacturers must adapt to these technologies, such as robotics, to remain relevant.

Singapore's manufacturing base has been gearing up to adopt the Industry 4.0 model to enhance its efficiency and

long-term competitiveness on the global stage.

In line with the Government's push towards automation and the adoption of new technologies, most manufacturers agree that Industry 4.0 technologies will change their operations.

Manufacturing companies looking to automate may find that one of the

biggest challenges they face comes from within – their employees.

Workers fear that the introduction of automation and increase in productivity will result in their redundancy.

However, very few occupations – less than 5 per cent – are candidates for full automation.

While machines are able to undertake an expanding range of tasks, many tasks still require human dexterity, critical thinking or on-the-spot decision-making, which a robot cannot do.

Contrary to the belief that automation will make the human workforce redundant, research has shown that robots will create up to two million jobs globally from 2017 to 2020.

Automation is a frontrunner of the digital transformation movement, helping to streamline operations in various sectors.

According to a study, more than half of global CEOs are exploring the advantages of collaboration between humans and machines.

Changi General Hospital uses a robot picker that can pick a range of objects from a shelf, allowing staff to focus on catering to patients' needs.

They also offer manufacturers a financially less daunting way to automate, fitting into production lines without overhauling existing infrastructure.

B-Loony Ltd, a manufacturer of promotional products such as food flags, bunting and balloons, deployed robots in its production line, increasing output and reducing average production cost.

Singapore is well-placed to drive growth in the adoption and development of robotics and automation solutions.

According to the Global Innovation Index, Singapore is a top performer for high- and medium-high-tech manufacturing and high-tech net exports, and is named the most innovative country outside of Europe.

However, the adoption of robotics still needs cultivation among small and medium enterprises (SMEs), while some workers will need reskilling to move up the value chain in a more automated economy.

The Government has set aside more than \$450 million to help companies adopt robotics technology, and is working with solutions providers to offer packaged solutions at a reasonable cost.

The Singapore Institute of Manufacturing Technology (SIMtech) was created to help SMEs innovate, automate and adopt new technologies.

SIMtech develops technology and manpower, and acts as an industry matchmaker for SMEs to find ways to improve their products and workflow.

There are also robotics courses available such as the UR Collaborative Robotics Course, to nurture a pipeline of talent to take on new and higher-value jobs that will arise from automation.

Benefits abound with automation adoption. Manufacturers can expect productivity rates to soar by 300 per cent through the employment of Industry 4.0 technologies.

As Singapore continues to strengthen its adoption of automation and robotics, it will pave the way for its Asean counterparts.

Currently, Singapore has the second-highest robot density globally, with 658 robots per 10,000 employees in 2017.

With the introduction of new initiatives and platforms such as the Asean Smart Cities Network and the Singapore Cooperation Centres, Singapore is helping its neighbours facilitate cooperation on smart cities development, knowledge-sharing on technical capabilities while securing funding and support from external partners.

This is an excerpt of an article that appeared in The Business Times on Jan 25, 2019.

W Adapt & Grow

Interview Tips: Understanding Body Language

It only takes seven to 10 seconds before a person judges you based on first impressions. By reading your hiring manager's body language and sending the right signals back, you can build rapport and increase the chances of securing that job.

Here are the top cues to note:

- 1 Stand to greet your interviewer
- 2 Keep handshakes neutral
- 3 Maintain eye contact
- 4 Keep body posture relaxed
- 5 Smile sincerely

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JOB OPPORTUNITIES

EVENTS

9 FEB

Career Preview for Allied Health Professionals

8:30am – 1pm
Singapore Institute of Technology
SIT @ Dover, Main Auditorium
10 Dover Drive, Singapore 138683

Participating Employers:
Khoo Teck Puat Hospital • Sengkang Hospital • Singhealth Community Hospital • St Luke's Hospital • Vanguard Healthcare

Positions Available:
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1-2 MAR

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Participating Employers:
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WALK-IN INTERVIEWS

19 FEB

Environmental Services & Security Sectors

1pm – 4pm
WSG Careers Connect (Our Tampines Hub)
1 Tampines Walk, #04-32, Singapore 528523

Participating Employers:
Mini Environment Service Pte Ltd • Pico Guards Pte Ltd

Positions Available:
Cleaner • Security Officer • Senior Security Officer

Register now: <http://bit.ly/walkin2>

21 FEB

Manufacturing & Marketing Sectors

1pm – 4pm
WSG Careers Connect (WCC)
900 South Woodlands Drive, #06-14, Singapore 730900

Participating Employers:
NTS Components Singapore Pte Ltd • Odazit Pte Ltd

Positions Available:
Marketing Officer • Marketing Strategy Manager • QC Inspector • Spray Painter • Technical Specialist

Register now: <http://bit.ly/walkin3>



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A family history

Ms Kavita Munandi's late grandmother's spirit of service for others lives on in her

BY BRYANT CHAN

You could say that healthcare runs in Ms Kavita Munandi's blood.

After all, her late grandmother was a midwife at KK Women's and Children's Hospital many years ago. Ms Kavita would often drift off to sleep to her grandmother's bedtime stories of newborns and mothers.

So from a young age, she had already made up her mind that she was going to be a healthcare professional.

After her secondary education, she enrolled in the Nitec in Nursing at the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) to turn her dream into reality, even managing to secure herself an attachment to Singapore General Hospital.

"That was when I started to love the job," she says. "It made me realise how meaningful a career in healthcare was."

However, her grandparents' ailing health meant she had to drop out of ITE to take care of them.

Eight years passed, during which she lost both her grandmother and grandfather.

But Ms Kavita was determined to keep going, applying to various healthcare certifications and programmes to keep her childhood dream alive.

Her willingness to learn and tenacious attitude did not go unnoticed, eventually netting her a place in an eldercare programme with charity Daughters of Tomorrow and the Association of Women for Action and Research.

After she secured employment with Vanguard Healthcare, she was then selected for the Agency for Integrated Care's Community Care Traineeship Programme.



Ms Kavita Munandi is keeping her late grandmother's spirit of service alive. PHOTO: TED CHEN

Now 30 and a healthcare assistant in Vanguard Healthcare's Senior Care Centre in Woodlands, Ms Kavita is proudly keeping her grandmother's spirit of service alive.

She is currently undertaking the Singapore Workforce Skills Qualification Advanced Certificate in Community and Social Service (Senior Service), a full-time programme fully sponsored by Vanguard.

On completion of the three-month course, she will become a programme coordinator at Vanguard in April, taking up an instrumental role in the planning of activities for elderly clients.

This includes activities for dementia sufferers to better stimulate their cognitive faculties, as well as getting them to socialise more with each other.

And contrary to what the name might suggest, being a programme coordinator won't have her taking a back seat.

"This new role will have me doing less direct care, but I'll still be interacting with the clients to understand their needs and capabilities," she says. "This is so I can evaluate existing

activities to see if they are actually improving clients' physical and mental health."

Her eventual goal is to become a Client and Community Relations Executive at Vanguard, influencing policy and curriculum on an even greater scale.

"I want to do more for my elderly clients, and make their ageing process more meaningful," she says.

Still, Ms Kavita acknowledges that eldercare is not easy. It requires vast amounts of patience, not just when dealing with clients, but also when dealing with their next-of-kin, who can be even more demanding.

But she has learned to keep a positive attitude, thanks in no small part to the encouragement of her colleagues, whom she says are like family to her.

"I used to be very quiet and withdrawn, but after joining Vanguard, my colleagues have helped me become more confident and outspoken," she says. "Vanguard is a good place to learn, as the team is really supportive and encouraging."

I used to be very quiet and withdrawn, but after joining Vanguard, my colleagues have helped me become more confident and outspoken.

MS KAVITA MUNANDI
healthcare assistant
Vanguard Healthcare

Driving the Pulse of Healthcare



As the holding company of Singapore's public healthcare clusters and entities, MOH Holdings shares the collective vision to foster a healthy nation and enable our people to live well, live long and with peace of mind. To do so, we drive the optimal performance of our public healthcare sector through sector-level initiatives, unlocking synergies and economies of scale as well as address system level gaps.

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Join us if you share our passion and vision!

Positions

1FSS

- Site Finance Assistant Executive
- Assistant Executive, Payment Enquiry (AR)
- Account Assistant, GL
- Associate Executive/Senior Associate, Payroll
- Finance Executive/Accountant, GL

Finance

- Deputy Director/Director

Group Internal Audit

- Assistant Manager
- Manager
- Audit Business Analyst
- Audit Business Analyst (Database)
- Manager, Construction Audit
- Senior Executive, Funds Audit
- Assistant Manager, MediSave Surgical Audit
- Executive (MediSave/CHAS Audit)
- Manager, MediSave & CHAS Audit
- Assistant Manager, IT Audit
- Senior Manager, IT Audit

Healthcare Infrastructure Projects

- Assistant/Project Manager, Healthcare Infrastructure Construction Projects
- Manager/Senior Manager (Mechanical, Electrical)

HR & Talent Development

- Senior/Executive, HR Partnering
- Assistant Manager/Senior Executive, HR Partnering
- Senior Manager, HR Partnering (MOHT & ACE)

Means-Testing

- Senior/Executive
- Assistant Manager
- Assistant Director

Agency for Care Effectiveness

- Specialist/Senior Specialist, Medical Technology Evaluation
- Specialist/Senior Specialist, Economic Modelling & Outcome Evaluation
- Assistant Manager/Manager, Guidance Adoption
- Lead Specialist, Appropriate Care Guide
- Specialist/Senior Specialist, Appropriate Care Programme Development & Implementation

MOH Office for Healthcare Transformation

- Assistant Manager/Manager, Healthy-Living Community
- Senior Systems Engineer

Vanguard Healthcare

- Senior/Staff Nurse
- Nurse Manager



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Incorporated in 1984, main board-listed Singapore Press Holdings Ltd (SPH) is Asia's leading media organisation, engaging minds and enriching lives across multiple languages and platforms.

SPH's core business is publishing of newspapers, magazines and books in both print and digital editions. It also owns other digital products, online classifieds, radio stations and outdoor media.

On the property front, SPH owns 70% in a real estate investment trust called SPH REIT which comprises Paragon, a premier upscale retail mall and medical suite/office property in Orchard Road and The Clementi Mall, a mid-market suburban mall.

SPH also owns and operates The Seletar Mall. It built an upmarket residential condominium, Sky@eleven, at Thomson Road, and is developing a new commercial cum residential site at Woodleigh Road. It also has a stake in Chinatown Point.

It is in the aged care sector and owns Orange Valley, Singapore's largest private nursing home operator.

SPH runs a regional events and conferences arm, and a chain of Buzz retail outlets. It also invested in the education business.

For more information, please visit www.sph.com.sg
We invite you to be part of this team and join us as:

DIGITAL CREATIVE DESIGNER

The Job

Are you are a highly creative Digital Graphic/Video Designer who can communicate with high visual impact? Do you have expert knowledge of current design software and skilled with fleshing out concept ideas to a final deliverable? In this role, You will work on digital advertising creatives (images, videos, gif) for social media platforms, emails, display banners, and website assets.

To be successful, you will have a thorough understanding of branding and marketing, with the ability to vary style and layouts depending on the project and target audience. You should also have a solid understanding of mobile creative design, typography and be skilled in UI/UX. If you think you have what it takes to bring advertising messages to life with visual impact, we want to hear from you!

Key Responsibilities

- Utilize marketing assets to develop new, unique ideas and adapt key design elements across many different digital touchpoints while maintaining high standards and overall consistency within established guidelines and best practices from different brand owners.
- Able to continuously learn the features of social media ad platforms, and create digital content that fully take advantage of these features.
- Work with Campaign Managers / Media Buyers / Email marketers to prepare advertising creatives for various campaigns with different audiences.
- Work with Campaign Managers, Media Buyers & Analytics Manager to test and optimize creative performance via data driven weekly performance reports from Facebook Ads & Google Ads.
- Concept and create digital creatives such as animated video ads, email campaigns, display banners, and web assets.
- Ensure visual consistency and branding across various touchpoints (website, email campaigns, homepage, landing pages, web content, web banners, etc.)
- Ability to design emails utilizing a master responsive template and proof creative work in consistency across different email clients on desktop, tablet, and mobile.
- Be comfortable reviewing digital marketing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to continue to inform and evolve design strategy.
- Able to distant personal attachment from ideas and let market forces decide what works best.
- Complete special digital design projects as needed.

Requirements

- A digital portfolio
- 2+ years' experience in web and online design/programming(html emails, landing pages, webpages, etc)
- 2+ years' experience in responsive web/mobile design
- 2+ years' experience and demonstrated proficiency in Adobe software (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, Premiere).
- Video editing software of your choice (Apps, Programs, etc)
- A strong affinity to social media ad platform features.
- Knowledge of and proficiency coding in HTML5, CSS3 is a plus
- Strong communication skills
- Good interpersonal skills – works well with others
- Ability to organize, prioritize and manage numerous projects at a time
- Ability to work under pressure and turn work quickly when required
- Excellent attention to detail
- Interest in staying on top of the latest design digital advertising trends, creative production software and continued learning.

MARKETING TECHNOLOGY SPECIALIST

The Job

The SPH Digital Marketing Team is expanding to support evolving business models in our Circulation Division. We are hiring for an exciting new role as Marketing Technology Specialist to help improve our marketing campaigns. You will be supporting the marketing team to develop, improve and report on the effectiveness of campaigns across our Martech stack.

Experience / Skills

- Familiarity with some of the following (or similar) platforms: Salesforce Service Cloud, Salesforce Marketing Cloud and Cxense would be helpful.
- Project management experience in: CRM, Google Analytics, Facebook Business Manager, marketing automation.
- Project management techniques: An understanding of project management using agile methodologies.
- Data focused: Enjoys working with data and pursuing data accuracy.
- Knowledge of SQL will be a plus point

Role Responsibilities

- Problem solving: Able to translate business/marketing campaigns into a technological conversation between systems and databases.
- Data Management, Segmentation and Reporting: Data hygiene, Analysis of audience attributes, Data segmentation, Data classification and enrichment, Analysis of audience engagement, reporting across all channels and activities.
- Martech Configuration: Data migration, syncing of data process flows across ecosystem, building landing pages, building engagement programs. Working with our data scientists on reporting dashboards, attribution frameworks, lead scoring & predictive analytics.

Requirements

- Our ideal candidate would most likely have marketing background with a strong interest in data and marketing technologies to help improve marketing campaign performance and ROI.
- A degree, preferably in Computer Engineering or Marketing or any other discipline related to the skill(s) listed above.
 - Relevant work experience will also be considered for candidates with degrees in other disciplines.
 - 2 years of experience in delivering technological solutions to marketing campaigns.
 - A solid understanding of marketing, marketing technologies and ability to apply technology to grow our audiences and subscriptions.
 - Ability to learn new Customer Relationship Management Systems, Content Management Systems, Digital Analytics etc.

SENIOR MARKETING EXECUTIVE (CHINESE NEWSPAPERS)

The Job

- The individual will be responsible for planning marketing strategies for SPH publications, namely Lianhe Wanbao (WB) and Shin Min Daily News(SM).
- Strategize and execute above-the-line and below-the-line marketing campaigns.
- Provide analysis and reports on post-campaign results.
- Build and manage relations with internal stakeholders as well as external partners, such as retail chain and channel partners, sponsors and others.
- Produce concepts for creative artwork, and run effective publicity across traditional and digital media.
- Self-disciplined and motivated, with strong time and project management skills.
- Strategic thinker with strong analytical, problem solving and communication skills.
- This is a hands-on role requiring a great deal of independence, maturity and commercial mindedness.
- Plan and execute subscription events according to requirements, target audience and objectives.
- Come up with suggestions to enhance the campaign's success
- Prepare budgets and ensure adherence
- Source and negotiate with vendors and suppliers
- Coordinate all operations
- Lead promotional activities for the event

Requirements

- Bachelor's Degree
- Experience in marketing and FMCG retail chain related industries are a plus.
- Possess a good understanding of customer behavior and segmentation in B2B and B2C sector.
- Proficient with Excel, Word, PowerPoint.
- Have prior experience with digital media platforms that includes results monitoring
- Must be fluent in Chinese (both spoken and written)

SENIOR MARKETING EXECUTIVE (LIANHE ZAOBAO)

The Job

Duties of a Marketing Executive include:

- The position requires a highly motivated individual to develop and implement subscription and promotion campaigns to grow Lianhe Zaobao.

- Your main responsibilities involve forming effective above and below the line advertising communications and execution that will drive targets and results set.
- You will liaise with the creative agencies to develop effective communication creatives and marketing concepts to drive newspaper subscription.
- You are required to provide support on events management pertaining to launches, promotions and roadshows through event planning and implementation.
- You need to manage and upkeep Advertising and Promotions budget, and prepare post campaign analysis.
- Working closely with the Senior Manager, you are also required to develop new key target segments, namely Expatriates and the younger generations to grow SPH newspaper subscriptions.
- It will involve identifying and sizing up new segment base and develop tailored marketing programs to reach out to these target segments.
- You are required to identify appropriate business partnership opportunities for sponsorship tie-up to drive product sampling to target segments.

Requirements

- Bachelor's Degree preferably in Business Administration/Marketing
- At least 4 years of relevant experience
- A team player with a proven track record of conducting marketing promotions and campaigns
- Some levels of experience and proven success in negotiating for sponsorship deals would be advantage
- Strong written and communication skills in Mandarin
- An independent worker who works well in a cross-functional team environment
- Confident, resourceful and works well under pressure
- Ability to resolve conflicts and stay focused on achieving the targets

AUDIENCE INSIGHTS SPECIALIST

Sitting within the Media Strategy & Analytics department, SPH's Analytics team serves as the data analytics centre of excellence for the whole company. We integrate and gatekeep all major data sources across SPH's media divisions, on top of which we create visualisations and perform analytics functions to drive business decisions. We also formulate and execute advanced analytics and machine learning projects to help business units achieve their objectives.

We are looking for two articulate and cross-functional audience insights specialists to join the team and help provide our media divisions with a composite view of SPH's product users, as well as identify any audience gaps in the company's product portfolio. This role will report to the Analytics Lead and work closely with the media divisions including editorial, product, ad sales and circulation sales teams.

The Job

- Work with the data analytics and research teams to generate audience insights across disparate data sets
- Identify data gaps and create strategies for data collection
- Help to develop and track audience growth and loyalty against industry-standard targets and metrics, including benchmarking against competitors
- Help newsrooms create content insights to fine tune their editorial strategy and monitor the performance of the resulting content strategy
- Use audience insights to help product development and sales teams refine and craft new products and marketing campaigns
- Create dashboards and regular reports to share audience metrics and actionable insights
- Conduct market scanning to identify audience gaps in the product portfolio

Requirements

- Minimum 2-4 years of experience in dealing with data, business intelligence or audience development, preferably in a media-related industry
- Familiar with interpreting and analysing survey results and large datasets
- Excellent communication skills and experience with Powerpoint
- Comfortable multi-tasking and works well under pressure
- Excellent at collaborating across departments/teams
- Experience with content analysis preferable
- Hands-on experience with analytics tools such as Google Analytics, FB Insights and Chartbeat preferable

Interested applicants, please email resume to sphtalent@sph.com.sg

(Only shortlisted candidates will be notified)



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